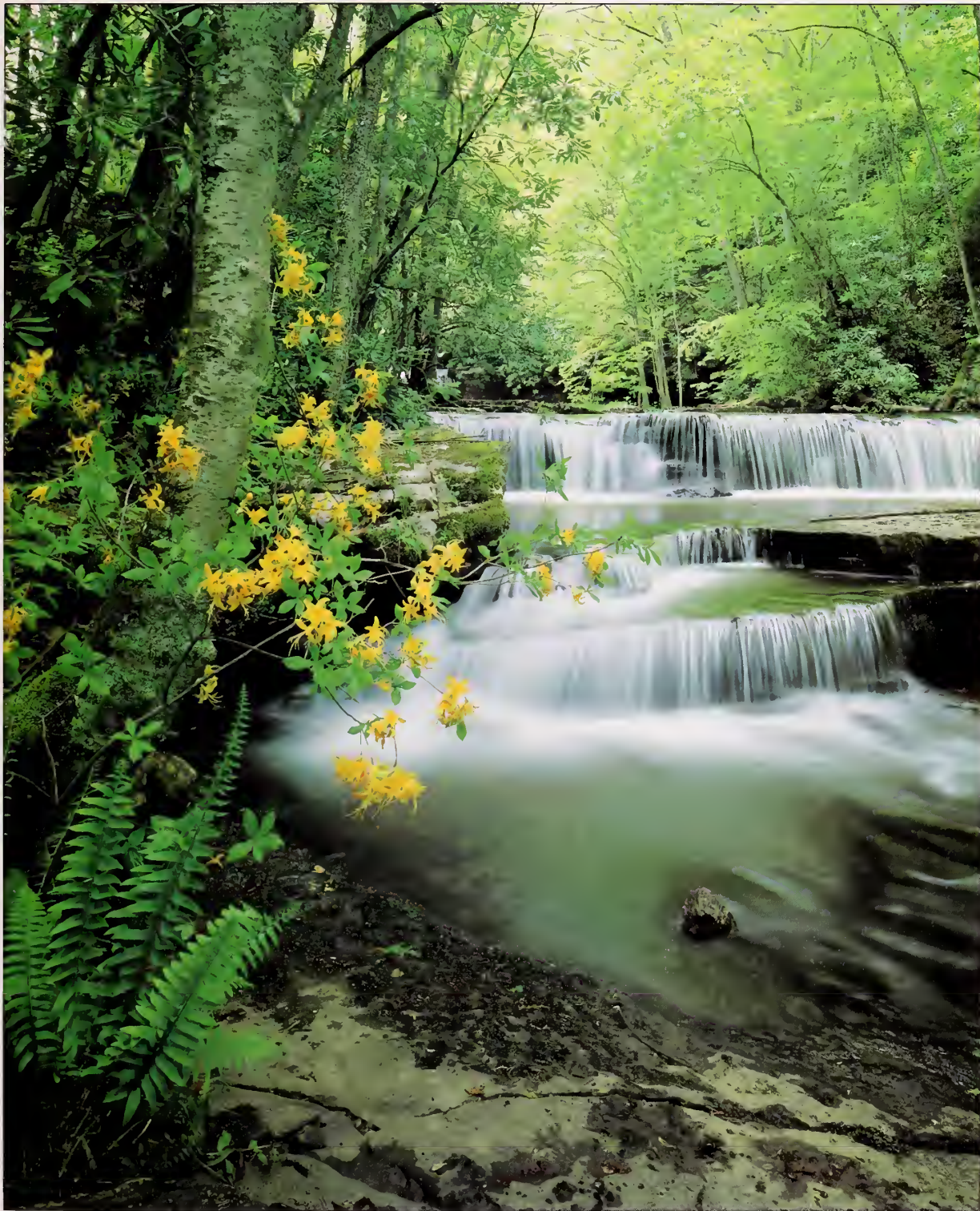


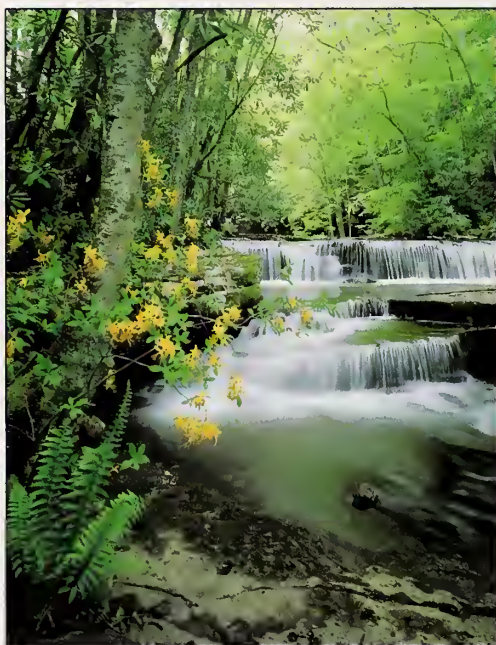
VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

AUGUST 1994

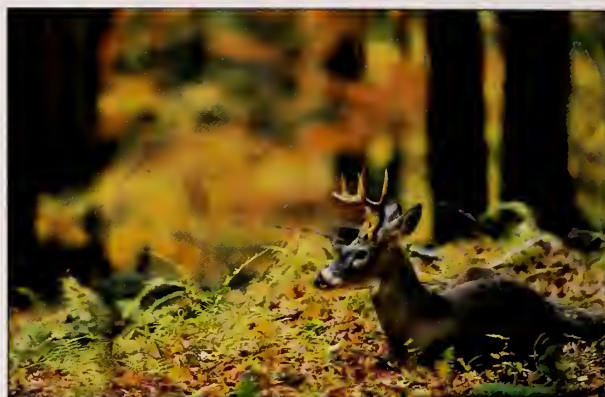
ONE DOLLAR



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



Cover: The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is listening to what anglers have to say about their trout waters. See page 12 for details; photo by Dwight Dyke.



Spending time in the woods observing patterns, movements, and behavior of whitetails before the season begins is the mark of a true deer hunter. See story on page 24; photo by Bill Lea.

Features

3 The Last Dam Hurdle

Only one more dam is blocking safe passage on the James River for fish migrating from the Chesapeake Bay to Lynchburg.

8 Fishing the Fall Lines by Bob Gooch

Fishing the fall lines on our major rivers can be a real treat for the angler in search of a new kind of fishing.

12 "And now, a word from our trout anglers..."

by Larry Mohn

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' latest survey of trout anglers across the state has yielded some surprising views on our state trout program.

16 New River Float Trips

by Paul E. Bugas, Jr and Daniel A. Garren

24 The Hunt Begins...*Today* by Gerald Almy

Hunting season for white-tailed deer may not be open officially for over two more months, but preseason scouting is the essential first step in hunting—and it begins today.

28 Keeping Sharp on Squirrels by Bob Gooch

Hunting squirrels is excellent training for the big-game season ahead.

August Journal

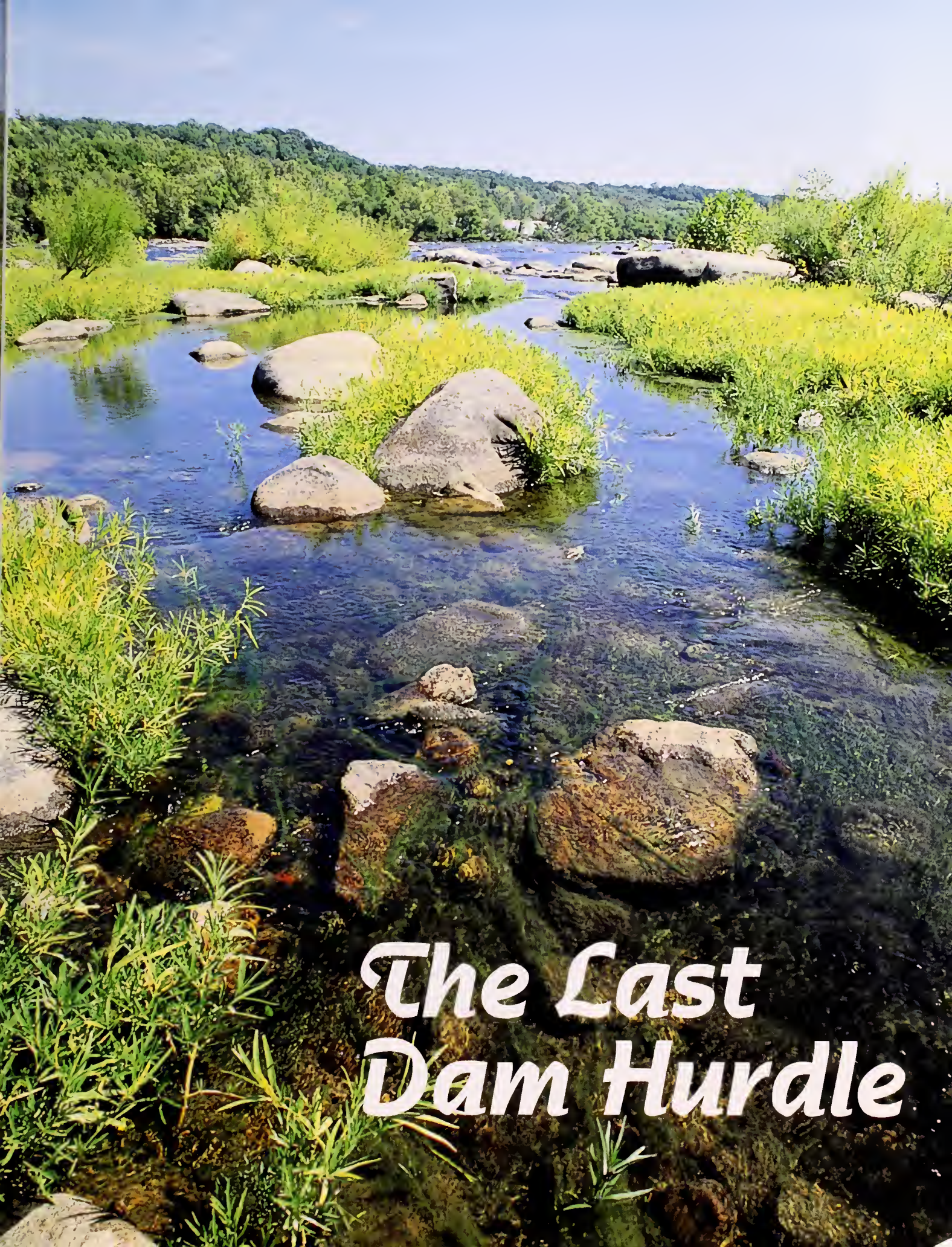
31 News

34 Photo Tips

33 Safety

35 Recipes

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources



The Last Dam Hurdle



Dwight Dyke

Only one more dam is blocking safe passage on the James River for fish migrating from the Chesapeake Bay to Lynchburg.

Though we often wish to turn the clocks back to a time when life was simpler, the air was cleaner, and the fish more plentiful, it happens only rarely that our wishes come true. But today, right in front of our noses as we paddle down the James River or cross its waters on our way to work, a miracle is happening. For the first time in over 200 years, we may soon gaze into the river as our ancestors did,

and watch shad, herring, and perhaps even young striped bass swimming powerfully 143 miles into the heart of Virginia. As we fish the banks of the James River in Lynchburg or the Rivanna River in Charlottesville, we may pinch ourselves to make sure we are not dreaming as we reel in a fish smelling of the ocean.

There are indeed some wonderful things happening in Virginia.

Since 1987, with the signing of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement, Virginians have committed themselves to restoring the natural river habitat of the anadromous fish which spawn in our rivers, but spend most of their lives in the ocean. A major hurdle to these fish, both figuratively and literally, has been dams.

Since 1790, we have been blocking the passage of these fish to their historical spawning grounds which reach inland as far as Covington. We effectively closed off 227 miles, or 13,000 acres of spawning grounds to



Dwight Dyke

As soon as the final dollars can be raised to construct a vertical slot fishway at Boshers' Dam in Richmond (top), an estimated 1.2 million shad and 13 million river herring will return to the James River (above and preceding page) every spring, free to migrate upriver as far as Lynchburg.



Bosher's Dam in Richmond is the last barrier to migratory fish up the James River to Lynchburg. Not only will 143 miles of the James River welcome back spawning fish such as shad and herring once the fish ladder at Bosher's is complete, but five major tributaries: the Tye, Rockfish, Slate, Rivanna, and Willis Rivers, also will be reopened to migratory fish in the process. Future plans have been made to provide fish passage through the dams on the Appomattox River. *Graphics by Pels.*

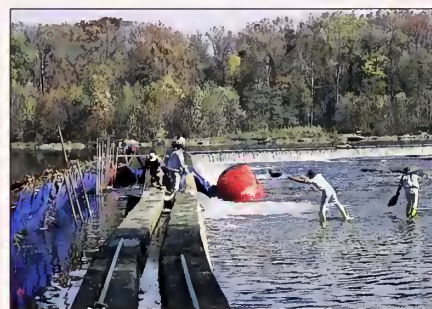
fish such as shad, herring, and striped bass—along with the most valuable commercial fishery in Virginia. It should come as no surprise that their numbers plummeted as the fish lost the waters of their birth.

In 1989, however, the tide changed. The dams on the James and Chickahominy Rivers and Herring Creek at Manchester/Browns Island, Walkers, and Harrison Lake were opened to fish passage via either dynamite or fish ladders, and in 1993 a 30-foot wide notch was made in the Williams Island Dam. Only one more dam is stopping fish from spawning up 143 miles of the James River from Richmond to Lynchburg. If we make Bosher's Dam passable, 11,000 acres of habitat will be open to migratory fish once more.

But as difficult as dams are for fish to negotiate through or over, they are equally difficult and costly for us to breach. Blowing a 124-foot hole in Manchester Dam and breaching three spillway sections on



Dwight Dyke

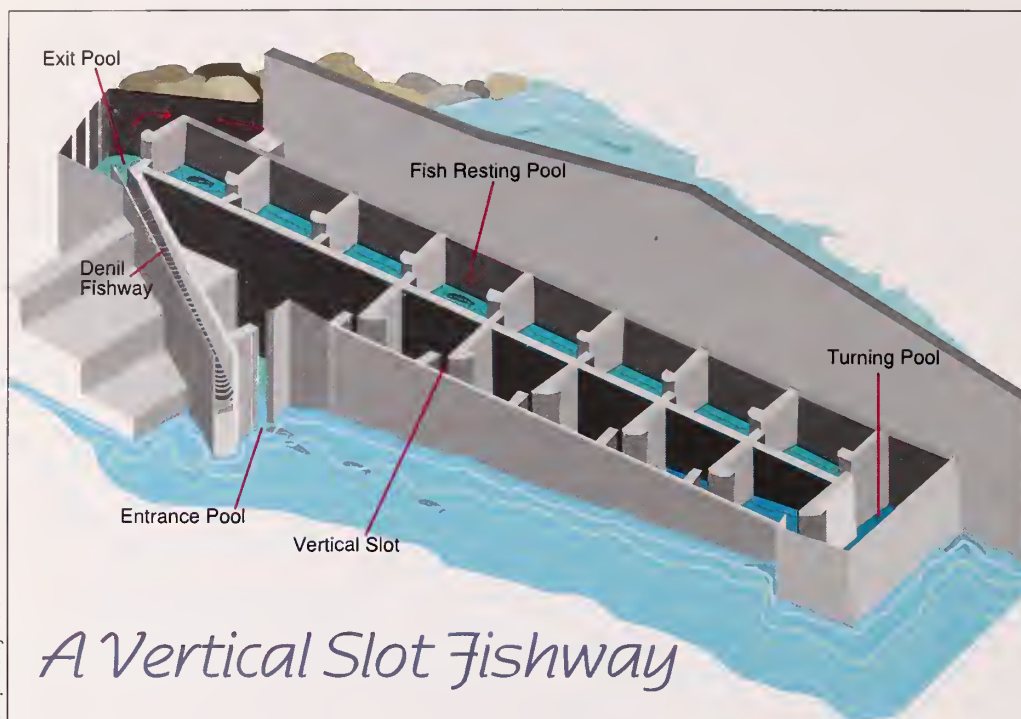


Sarah White



Dwight Dyke

Striped bass (above) and other anadromous fish, such as shad and herring, spend most of their lives in the ocean, returning each spring to the freshwater rivers of their birth to spawn. With public and private efforts to raise funds to provide passage through the dams (like the Williams Dam notch completed top right) which have been blocking these fish from their upriver journeys, and the efforts of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to restock fingerlings and fry upriver of the dams (above right), it is estimated that a \$5-7 million per year recreational and commercial fishery can be reestablished on the James.



Resembling an artificial waterfall, the vertical slot fishway proposed for Boshers' Dam provides passage for migratory fish through an ascending series of vertical "slots." The fish are initially attracted to the smooth rushing water at the entrance to the fishway. Such water signals clear channels of access to fish, whereas whitewater signals obstacles such as rocks and boulders. Swimming into the first vertical slot, fish may rest before swimming to the next level. Smooth, rushing water continues to direct the fish on their ascent through the series of slots, and a turning pool allows them an additional resting point along the way. At the exit pool, the fish continue their push upriver, and will be free of any barriers on the James River for the next 143 miles. On some vertical slot fishways, an additional Denil fishway is located at the top of the exit pool, and provides an alternate, more direct route upstream for fish, as well as additional attraction water near the entrance of the vertical slot fishway. **Below:** Anadromous fish of our rivers. *Illustrations by Duane Raver.*

Browns Island Dam cost a cool \$179,000. Making a 30-foot wide notch in Williams Island Dam cost \$127,000, while a fish ladder at Harrison Lake cost \$90,000. What man has made so formidable is not so easily (and cheaply) undone. And raising the \$750,000 needed to complete an 80-foot long vertical slot fishway at Boshers' Dam once seemed impossible as imagining fish swimming over 250 miles from Lynchburg to the Chesapeake Bay.

But people have persevered. In 1993, the James River Fish Restoration Project, spearheaded by the Lower James River Association, began to raise the funds necessary to provide fish passage at Williams and Boshers' Dams. A campaign committee was created, with former Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries board member Frank S. Sutton, Jr. of Richmond as chairman. The eight-person committee immediately began the daunting task of raising private funds to match initial contributions from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the state. The EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, the City of Richmond, the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board have all made

major donations, and money has also been committed from the sale of Virginia Saltwater Licenses.

In an unprecedented public/private effort to put their money where their dreams are, businesses and organizations such as the Ethyl Corporation, the Fly Fishers of Virginia, the Virginia Anglers Club, the Friendship Fund, Coastal Canoeists, the Garden Club of Virginia, Southern States, Crestar, Wheat First Foundation, Kingsmill Yacht Club, Nationsbank, C.F. Sauer and Sons, and Luck Stone Foundation have joined in the partnership to make Boshers' Dam passable to migrating fish. Over 100 individuals have also chipped in to bring the total up to 88% of the money needed to complete the Boshers' Dam fishway.

Some might ask why individuals, businesses, conservation groups and state, local and federal governments have gone to so much trouble, given so much of their money, time, and effort to open these waters to these fish. For some, it is the pure economic investment of knowing that for \$1 million or so, a \$5-7 million *per year* fishery will be restored. For others, it is the rebirth of a superb recreational fishery they are



American shad



hickory shad



blueblack herring



alewife



striped bass

dreaming of. And finally, for the rest of us, it might just be the knowledge that we've done something right for a change, that we've left something better than we found it for those fish, wildlife and people of the next generation.

There's a lot to be said for giving a little something back to the James River, and that giving is far from over. We need your support of the fish passage restoration effort in Virginia.

For more information on how you can help, write or call Patti Jackson at the Lower James River Association, P.O. Box 110, Richmond, VA 23201. 804/730-2898.



Dwight Dyke



Michael H. McCormack

Citizens, organizations, and business have responded to the call for help to finance the fishway at Boshers' Dam which will open up the James River (above) and its tributaries like the Hardware River (top) to migratory fish. Richmond Sports, located at 9880 W. Broad Street and 9530 Midlothian Turnpike, has joined the effort with Hooter's restaurant in Richmond by sponsoring a Team Bass tournament on September 25 at Osborne's Landing. A \$1500 guaranteed prize will be awarded to the first place two-angler team. Entry forms are available from Richmond Sports. All proceeds will be donated to the Lower James River Association to help fund the fishway. Call Dale Huggins at 804/527-7808 for details.



by Bob Gooch

Webster's defines the fall line as "the geographical line indicating the beginning of a plateau, usually marked by many waterfalls and rapids." Probably more appropriate for Virginia is the refinement, "the line east of the Appalachian Mountains, marking the end of the coastal plains and the beginning of the Piedmont Plateau." That's where you encounter fall lines in Virginia.

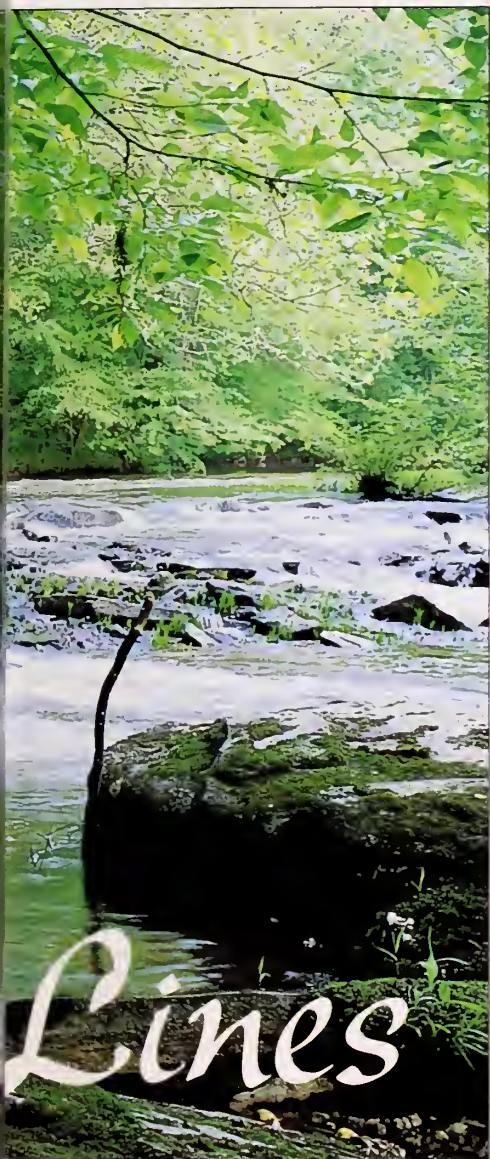
We have some exciting whitewater at the fall lines on rivers such as the Appomattox, James, Potomac, and Rappahannock. Ask any white-

*Fishing the fall lines
on our major rivers
can be a real treat for
the angler in search of
a new kind of fishing.*

water canoeist. But there are also fall lines like those in the Mattaponi and Pamunkey where the changes in the river are more subtle, less dramatic. Any Virginia stream of appreciable size flowing from the Piedmont Plateau into the flat Coastal Plains has a fall line at the point of the topographical change.

It's worth mentioning here that the fall lines on the Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers, as defined in the fishing regulations of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, can be misleading. The actual fall lines of the two rivers are far upstream from the U. S. 360 Highway Bridge. The Department uses the highway bridge as a convenience in establishing a line of demarcation for managing the stressed populations of American shad and striped bass, a point easily identified by anglers.

In Virginia, the better known fall lines are those marked by "many water falls and rapids." The Appomattox, James, Potomac, and Rappahannock Rivers, for example. But



Dwight Dyke

there is a certain uniqueness about these fall lines. They are also a general indication of the point where the fast water of the rivers clash with the tides. Such fall lines are found generally in the northeastern part of Virginia beginning with the James River to the south and ending with the Potomac. The Potomac, incidentally, is owned by the state of Maryland, but Virginia license holders are allowed to fish it, hence the justification for including it here.

The other fall lines occur south of the James River in the southeastern part of Virginia. There, fall lines occur near the "ending of the Coastal Plains and the beginning of the Piedmont Plateau," but the tides are far downstream in North Caroli-

na beyond the Virginia border and miles below the fall lines. The Meherrin and Nottoway Rivers are good examples.

That's a close look at Virginia's fall lines. But what does it mean to anglers?

Anglers know the fall lines best as prime spots to catch migratory fish in the spring, fish that make annual runs up the big streams to spawn. What many don't realize is that these fascinating sections of our rivers can provide exciting fishing throughout the long fishing year.

But before we even consider fishing the fall lines, particularly those marked by "many waterfalls and rapids," we need to recognize the fact that they can be dangerous. Often the currents are strong and tricky and much of the water is deep. Add the fact that they are best fished by wading, and we have a potentially risky undertaking if not approached with care. People lose their lives just about every summer while fishing or playing in the fast water of Virginia's major fall lines.

I hesitate to go so far as to say the fall lines are all but impossible to fish from a boat or canoe, but doing so is certainly impractical and rarely tried.

Most fall-line anglers instead wade. This means chest waders during the colder months, particularly during the late winter or early spring when the first shad appear. During the warmer months, wading wet in shorts and sneakers is comfortable—and safer. Fall or stumble in the fast water and your waders are suddenly full of cold water and dragging you down. Add the strong currents, and you are in trouble.

Other than exercising caution and feeling your way along, the best safety tool is a good life jacket. If you lose control, it will keep you afloat even though you may suffer cuts, bruises, and other injuries if you are sent tumbling downstream in the fast and treacherous current.

Wear that life jacket, but don't rely upon it completely. Watch your step. Among the major risks is suddenly stepping into deep water at a drop-off. Over the years, the current has carved all kinds of formations in

those fall lines. The bottoms of the streams are uneven, the boulders big, and the rocks slippery. After a couple of icy dunkings, I adopted the practice of moving slowly—one foot at the time. Move one foot, and make sure it is firmly planted before moving the other. Most falls occur when the angler takes a step and then moves the second foot too quickly, not realizing that when he shifts his weight to the forward foot it's likely to shoot out from beneath him. That forward foot may be resting on a loose or slick rock or some other unstable spot.

I've never fished the Rappahannock fall line in Fredericksburg that I didn't get the urge to move to some far point in the stream that seemed to offer better fishing—and away from the crowd. In the past I have given in to that urge and enjoyed some fast shad fishing I would not have otherwise experienced. Fortunately, I never paid the price for taking the risk, but I wouldn't do it today. Oh, the joys—and risks—of carefree youth!

I don't want to lay on the risks so heavily that an angler might be discouraged from fishing the fall lines, however. Take the precautions and move carefully as you fish and the risks are minimal.



Dwight Dyke



Bill Lea

Although a heavy rain upstream can turn our major rivers like the Rappahannock (top) into muddy torrents at times, there is nothing quite like fishing or canoeing the fall lines of such rivers for a day filled with excitement.

The fall lines are rich in both oxygen and food, factors that attract fish to them, particularly in warm weather. They make them attractive to smallmouth bass during the summer months when the fishing can otherwise be slow. The James, Potomac, Rappahannock and other rivers featuring fall lines are good smallmouth streams. The racing, tumbling water catches plenty of oxygen, and the strong currents stir up an abundance of food. Additionally, small fish are forced by the currents into small pockets that make them vulnerable to feeding bass. A smallmouth taken from a fast fall line is likely to be fat and full of fight—well fed, and streamlined by life in the fast lane...uuuh...water. The bass fishing can be good even during the winter months.

An often overlooked feature of fall lines is their accessibility to anglers living in metropolitan areas. Back in colonial times, the fall lines were the upstream limits to sailing vessels and communities naturally sprang up there. Today these are major cities such as Fredericksburg, Richmond, and even Washington, D.C.

A few years ago, while experiencing a lull in the shad fishing in the Rappahannock, I moved over to the near bank and found a small stream entering the river. Over the years it had dug out a sizeable pool where it poured into the wide river bed. The water looked good—dark, deep, and mysterious. On my first cast I was rewarded with a good strike and soon landed a nice rock bass. And then another. As I was stringing the second fish, another angler approached. We exchanged greetings. "Many of these in here?" I asked, hoping I might be talking to a veteran of the river. "Soon as the weather warms up there'll be plenty of big, black bream in here," he volunteered. "Catch them then until the weather gets real cold."

In its broadest sense, "bream" as used by the veteran angler includes bluegills and redbreast sunfish as well as rock bass. These panfish are reasonably abundant in the fall lines water, but look for them out of the



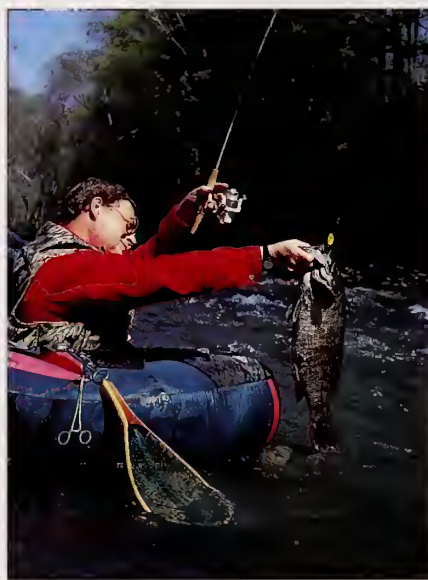
current, in deep, quiet pockets or pools, and on the lee side of mid-stream boulders. They don't fight the current as might the stronger bass and shad. Tom Rodgers, now living in South Carolina where he heads the Black Bass Foundation, grew up in Fredericksburg and cut his angling teeth in the Rappahan-

nock fall line. "The white perch come first in the spring, followed by herring, shad, and then bass," he told me recently.

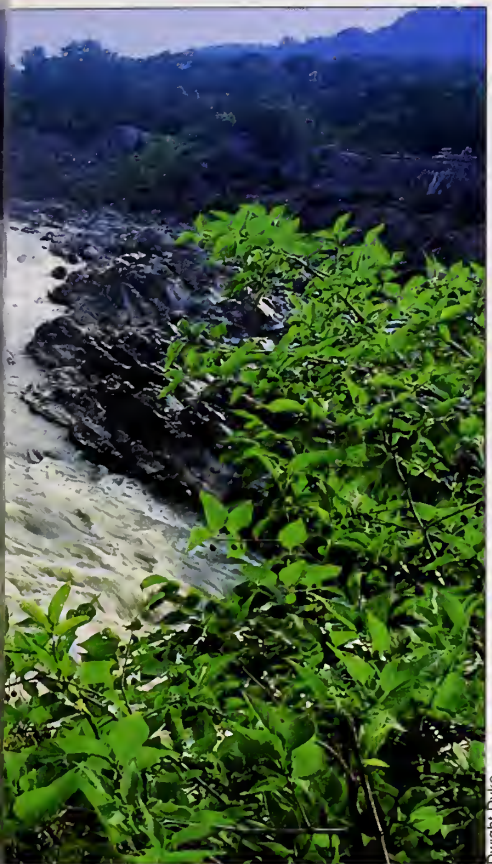
I was first drawn to the fall line to fish for white perch when I was living in northern Virginia years ago. My young family and I arrived in the spring, and a chance conversation with an associate revealed that the white perch were hitting in the Chain Bridge area of the Potomac River.

The fall line in the Potomac River offers some of the most dangerous fast water in the East, water that challenges the very best white-water enthusiasts. I wasn't interested in testing those rapids, but I did want to check out the white perch fishing. "Use blood worms," someone said. I did, though I would have preferred a fly rod.

The little perch were thick in the river and we caught them where the rapids began to smooth out a bit—all we could possibly use. The smallest members of the true bass family were making their annual spawning



Soc Clay



Dwight Dyke

Fall line fishing doesn't have to be a dangerous affair, but when fishing such areas which are sometimes characterized by fast water and rocks (like the Potomac River, above), it is best to take extra safety precautions. One can inevitably find some quieter area to fish, however, which can easily be negotiated from shore or even from a tube (below left and right).

run up the big river. The event was a ritual of spring, and I suspect it still is, though I haven't fished there in years.

The white perch are fun—and tasty—but the real stars of the Virginia fall lines are the shad, both the American and smaller hickories. The fish hit hard and jump spectacularly, making them a favorite of many anglers. I first fished for them in the Rappahannock just upstream from the U. S. 1 Highway Bridge, but I've also fished for them in the James River fall line marked by the fast water in Richmond.

The fact that these runs have declined alarmingly in recent years has caused concern among fisheries managers as well as anglers, and efforts are being directed toward restoring them. A major project is a fishway on Bosher's Dam in Rich-

mond, the final obstruction in the shad's migration to its traditional spawning waters far up the James River. In the meantime, shad fingerling are being stocked by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in the James River watershed in an effort to jump start the revival. If successful, the shad run in the James River will recover some of its glory of yesteryear.

Both the American and hickory shad are down in numbers, but the American has been hit the hardest. At the present they are protected in Virginia tidal waters and in the James River above the 14th Street Bridge in Richmond, above the Emporia Dam in the Meherrin River, and above Walkers Dam in the Chickahominy River.

Another fall line fish with a rich tradition that dates from colonial times is the striped bass, but they too have fallen on hard times. They are making a remarkable comeback, however, and the future of this popular fish looks bright. In the not-too-distant future, hopefully, we will again be fishing for them in the fall lines or in the rivers just below them. They, too, may someday pass through the fall lines on the James River and swim far upstream to their traditional spawning grounds.

An often overlooked angling reality is the productive water at the point where the current of the rivers collide with the incoming tides, tem-

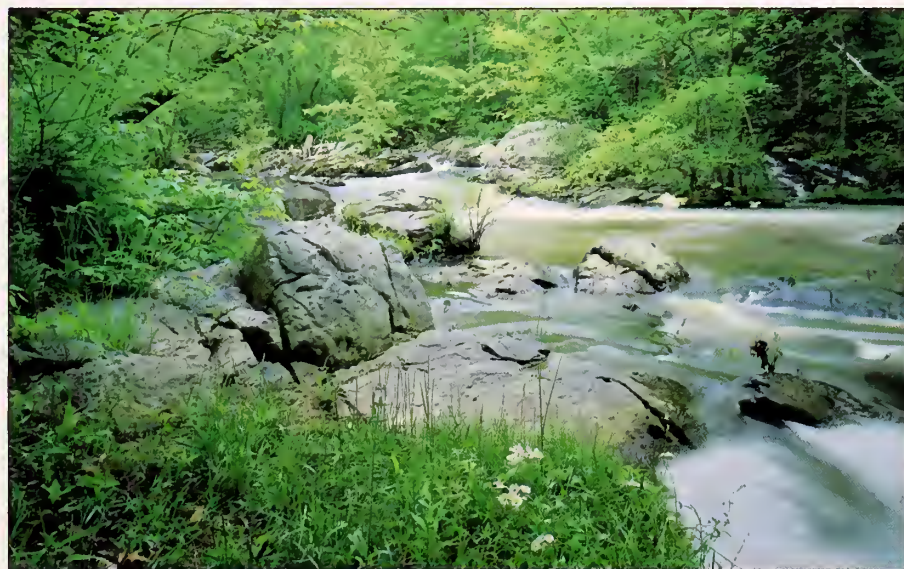
porarily suspending movement of the water. Suspended in that idle water is food drifting from both directions—moving in on the tide and from upstream with the river current. Once the high tide turns the spell is over, but in the meantime the fishing should be good. To a lesser degree, the same is true of the foot of all fall lines, even those that are not on tidal rivers. Food carried by the swift currents hits the slower waters and tends to concentrate there—often in deep pools churned out by the fast water pouring in.

I suspect the great majority of fall-line anglers wade and fish with spinning tackle. The versatile tackle allows flexibility in casting and fighting fish. Fly fishermen will do well, but their lures should include some streamers and weighted flies to go deep. Bait-casting tackle is certainly appropriate, but a little heavy for panfish and hickory shad. Shad darts and tiny shad spoons are difficult to handle on the heavier bait-casting tackle.

Regardless of the tackle used, it should be slightly heavier than that customarily used for stream fishing. The strong currents are the fish's ally, be it a scrappy bronzeback or a leaping shad.

For those who haven't tried it, fall line fishing is worth taking the plunge. □

Bob Gooch is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.



Dwight Dyke



“And, now, a word from our trout anglers...”

by Larry Mohn

Public opinion surveys seem to have become a part of our everyday lives. We are all familiar with the almost daily results of political polls, college football and basketball polls, and we are more frequently seeing public opinion surveys on such outrageous things as whether Tonya really knew prior to the attack on Nancy. Although I have a problem trying to figure out what that last category of polls has to do with anything, opinion polls conducted by sound scientific meth-

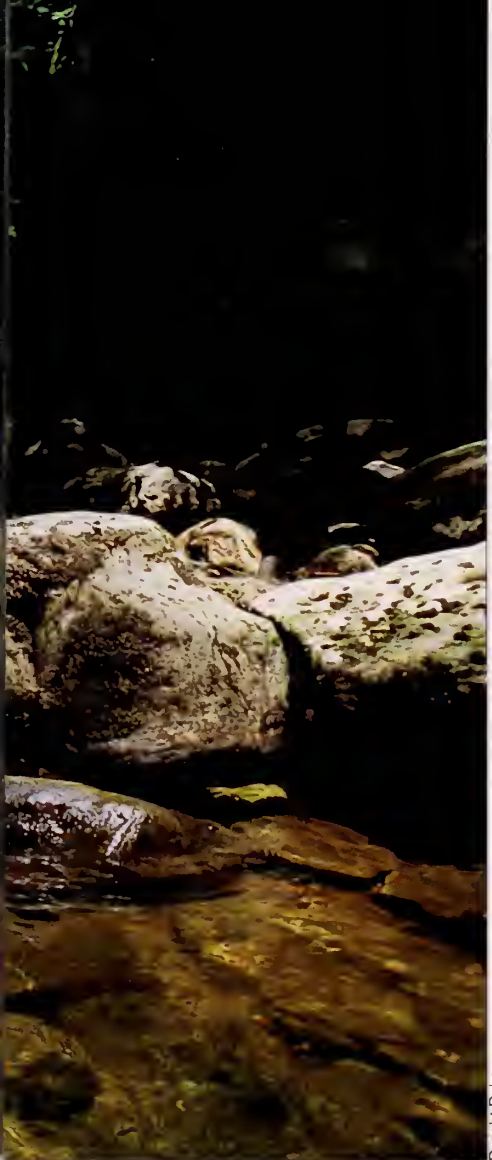
The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' latest survey of trout anglers across the state has yielded some surprising views on our state trout program.

ods can be very valuable in helping public agencies manage their programs.

In 1986, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) conducted its first trout angler survey. The trout program undoubtedly, is the Fisheries Division's

most controversial, and accordingly, difficult to manage. In fact, if the Division were to guide this program strictly on input received through individual letters and petitions, it would look quite different. Thus, the 1986 survey was conducted to get a handle on the preferences of trout anglers as a group so that any changes to the program would reflect what anglers wanted.

At the time the 1986 survey was conducted, a number of anglers were concerned that the Department was planning to manage by majority rule rather than by sound



Dwight Dyke

catchable trout program once centered around an opening day and a restocking during an inseason closure. At that time, trout were also occasionally stocked in June and in the fall. The stocking is now more frequent, with larger streams receiving up to 7 stockings per year rather than the previous 2 to 4.

Several new programs have been developed since 1980, including an extensive fingerling stocking program, trophy trout streams, and delayed harvest fisheries. The special regulation streams have been increased from 5 to 27. The 1986 trout angler survey resulted in adoption of an earlier opening day and the beginning of the unannounced trout stocking policy.

Based on the mail we receive directly from anglers or through their elected representatives, we might conclude that one or another of these changes has ruined trout fishing in Virginia. However, it is well documented that agencies more frequently hear from dissatisfied constituents than from those who like a program. Only through a sound scientifically based survey can we determine the true opinions of any group of constituents.

Thus, the 1993 Trout Angler Survey was conducted to evaluate how anglers felt about the current trout program, to determine if recent changes to the program are still supported, and to determine where anglers would like to see additional program changes.

The angler survey was conducted using established procedures developed for similar mail surveys. A sample of 1600 anglers who had purchased a trout stamp in 1991 were randomly selected from our records. These anglers were sent a simple questionnaire that was returned to VDGIF. Those not returning the first mailing were sent up to two more reminders. Returns totalled 73%, which is phenomenally high for a mail survey. This level of response indicates that trout anglers are intensely interested in their sport. Although all trout anglers were not surveyed (because of the prohibitively high costs), the results

of this survey are statistically accurate within 2 to 4 percentage points.

Currently, the most controversial feature of our catchable trout program is the unannounced stocking policy. Our written correspondence indicates high levels of dissatisfaction, while our verbal comments are more favorable. In the 1986 survey, unannounced trout stocking was favored by a slight majority of anglers (Figure 1). Many people thought this majority opinion might be reversed in the 1993 survey, but in fact, a much stronger majority now favors unannounced stocking. These results would indicate that either more anglers have found that they like the change made to unannounced, or that we have had some turnover in the people who are buying trout licenses.

A related question asked anglers when they preferred to fish for trout in relation to when fish were stocked. Only 8% of those anglers

Figure 1

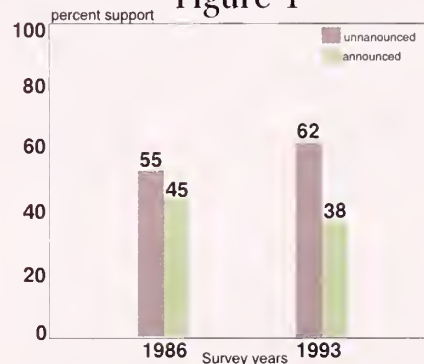


Figure 2

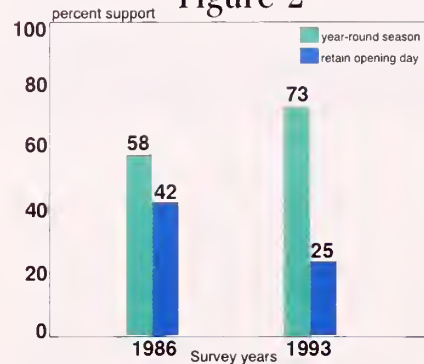


Figure 1 and 2: Of the over 1,000 trout anglers responding to our 1993 Trout Angler Survey, 62% favored unannounced stockings and 73% favored a year-round trout season. These figures were up from our 1986 survey. Graphics by Pels.

biological principles. In actuality, fish and wildlife populations can be managed biologically with many variations. The catchable trout program, for example, is primarily a recreational program with very limited biological features. In this case, wide variations in the program are feasible without compromising any biological principles. One of my college professors insisted that fisheries management was an art rather than a science, because management decisions had to involve so much more than biology. If that is the case, then management of Virginia's catchable trout program certainly takes an artist's touch.

Virginia's trout program has been evolving steadily since the Fisheries Division completed a statewide trout stream inventory in 1980. The

surveyed preferred to trout fish on the date of stocking, while 66% did not consider the stocking date as being important to when they fished a stream.

Why would anglers not be so concerned with stocking date? It probably relates to the first question of the survey which asks anglers why they fish. Most (70%) fish mainly for relaxation, the outdoor experience, or sharing time with friends and families, while only 26% of anglers consider catching fish most important. If the catching of fish is secondary to this first group, their relaxation and outdoor experience would be enhanced if they were fishing on days when few other anglers were present.

The question that stirs almost as much sentiment as the unannounced trout stocking is whether



VDGIF's catchable trout program (above and left) is one of its most controversial, with the battle still raging over announced versus unannounced stockings, and a year-round season versus an historical yearly opening of the season.



Roy Edwards



Roy Edwards

we should continue to have an opening day or move to a year-round open trout season like some of our bordering states. The 1986 survey showed that a majority of anglers favored a year-round season (Figure 2). However, at that time, VDGIF decided not to adopt such a season. The 1993 survey shows a growing number of anglers support this change and the Department will give careful consideration to this op-

tion as we evaluate potential changes to the trout program this year.

It is interesting to note the response of anglers to several questions related to opening day. Only 5% of anglers preferred to fish on opening day, although 61% stated that they normally did fish on this day. It appears that, although the opening day does have a high participation level among trout anglers, few of those anglers are intensely interested in continuing the opening day tradition.

Special regulation areas can also be very controversial and the results of this survey suggest that a gradual increase in the number of these areas has support. There is only limited support for a general increase in special regulation areas (23%), but when we asked if anglers supported additional special regulations if new waters were made available to trout fishing as a result, support was very strong (73%). In fact, VDGIF's efforts in recent years has been to develop new special regulation areas on private waters or on those streams not supporting significant trout fisheries. Of those anglers who gave a preference, 38% preferred to fish special regulation areas versus 43% who preferred put-and-take and

19% who preferred wild fisheries. A total of 43% of all anglers fish special regulation waters at least once each year and 70% support an increase in the number of delayed harvest streams. Our conclusion is that a large number of our trout anglers enjoy the added quality of special regulations despite the reduced opportunity to creel fish, and that additional special regulations waters are justified.

A fall stocking program was initiated after the 1986 survey due to support from trout anglers. The results of the 1993 survey indicate that trout anglers like the fall/winter trout stocking and that support for increasing these stockings has grown from 58% to 64%. Estimates by anglers of their fishing effort show that about one third of the total angling pressure for trout is expended during the fall and winter, even though the Department currently stocks less than 10% of the trout during this time period. A switch from an opening day to a year-round season would provide much greater opportunity to design a stocking program that would increase fall and winter stocking.

Finally, it is interesting to note what anglers like about the trout program. Overall, 59% of trout an-



Dwight Dyke



Dwight Dyke

The designation of special regulation areas (above), which offer additional opportunities to trout anglers, but reduced creel limits and possible gear restrictions, also can be controversial, but generally has the support of trout anglers.

glers expressed satisfaction with the current program as compared to 52% in 1986. Anglers like the current size of trout stocked and the current creel limit of six. Fifty-five percent of anglers supported an increase in the trout stamp to keep the program at its current level. The legislature approved a trout license increase in their last session and that will be in effect next season. Anglers prefer the unannounced stocking policy and the weekly announcement of streams that are stocked. Anglers appear to want a wide variety of trout fishing opportunities as demonstrated by support for all the various programs.

In summary, the 1993 trout angler survey showed increasing support for the changes made to the trout program after the 1986 survey, and suggested that further modification of the program is desired by most anglers. It appears that the program is going in the direction that the majority of anglers prefer and that VDGIF will have to give strong consideration to year-round trout season, increased fall and winter trout stocking, and opening of additional waters to special regulations.

VDGIF will be reviewing fishing regulations this year. Any new regulation proposals will be presented to the Board in August and final regulation passage is scheduled for October after a 60-day public comment period. All anglers are encouraged to comment to the Board or to staff. The Department's goal is to create a program that anglers enjoy—your input is important to achieving that goal. □

Larry Mohn is a VDGIF regional fisheries manager stationed in Verona.



New River Float Trips

By Paul E. Bugas, Jr. and
Daniel A. Garren

The New River is unique among Virginia's waterways. Its very name belies the fact that it is an ancient system, second only to the Nile River of Africa as the oldest river in the world. Originally known as the Teays River, geologic events have changed the course and size of the New River into what we know it as today. Native American

tribes, such as the Kanawha and Shawnee, inhabited its shores at the time when white settlers first came into the New River Valley in the mid-1600s.

The New River actually begins as two streams in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. The North Fork starts as a collection of seeps and runoffs on Snake Mountain in Watauga County, plunging down toward its junction with the South Fork of the New River 4 miles

from the Virginia line. The South Fork emerges from the ground as a series of springs near Blowing Rock before turning into a formidable stream that becomes the other arm of the New River.

Another remarkable feature of New River is that it flows from south to north, rather than the west to east pattern preferred by other major rivers along the eastern seaboard. Once it enters Virginia near Mouth of Wilson, the New River cuts a me-



Dwight Dyke

The New River (above) offers gorgeous scenery, good access and terrific fishing opportunities for just about every freshwater game fish in the state, including channel catfish (right).

andering swath through the southwestern corner of the state before turning into Bluestone Lake in West Virginia some 160 miles later. The New River then continues its course through the Mountain State until it becomes the Kanawha River at Gauley Bridge. The New River is, in fact, part of the Mississippi River drainage, and harbors many aquatic animals that are unique to that system.

Five dams impede the free-flowing New River at various locations in Virginia: Fields Dam, Byllesby

Dam, Buck Dam, Fries Dam, and Claytor Dam. Be sure to read over the float trips of choice in this article to see if you must prepare for a portage around one of these obstacles. Thanks to a new program, Partners in Rivers, portage access around Byllesby and Buck Dams will be available within the next few years. Be warned that large volumes of water are frequently released from these dams to generate electricity, so be ready to move ashore or to adjust your boating plans if you notice a sudden rise in the river.

The New River has several major Class II-III rapids in Virginia to interest whitewater enthusiasts, as well as plenty of flatwater to accommodate motorboaters. Plan on floating one hour per mile under normal conditions, especially if you plan to wet a line.

Simply stated, the New River rivals the James and Rappahannock Rivers as one of the best fishing rivers in Virginia. It supports outstanding populations of just about every major freshwater game fish in the state: smallmouth bass, spotted bass, largemouth bass, rock bass, striped bass, white bass, hybrid striped bass, muskellunge, walleye, black crappie, channel catfish, flat-head catfish, yellow perch, redbreast sunfish, and bluegill. State records that have been caught in New River include muskellunge (45 lbs.), smallmouth bass (7 lbs. 7 oz.), and yellow perch (2 lbs. 2 oz.). The state record spotted bass came out of Claytor Lake in 1993 at 3 lbs. 10 oz.

This river has the potential to yield many more record-setting catches in the future. No fish consumption advisories are currently in place on New River. Please check your fishing regulation pamphlet for appropriate fish length and daily creel limits on New River sportfish. Be sure to study newly established regulations on daily collection limits for bait species as well.

Virginia or North Carolina fishing licenses are good for that portion of mainstem New River from the confluence of the North and South Forks of New River to the confluence of Little River and New River

in Grayson County, Virginia.

New River Trail State Park parallels the river for over 50 miles, from Pulaski to Fries or Galax. It is a beautiful track of land that allows hikers and bicyclers to take in the beauty of the river as it sweeps through southwestern Virginia. Signs along the path put the user in touch with the history of New River, from its earliest Native American settlements to the construction of Claytor Dam.

Claytor Lake State Park is a 400+ acre jewel that adjoins the placid waters of Claytor Lake. A variety of recreational activities can be experienced at this facility, so be sure to check it out when planning a Virginia vacation. Outfitters are spread all along the New River, so a quick call to a local chamber of commerce will put you in touch with an experienced guide that will eliminate much of the worry about planning a float and/or camping trip along this historic Virginia waterway.

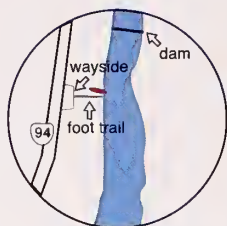
Approximately half of the access points noted on this map are developed public areas. The remainder are traditionally used sites that can accommodate a canoe or light jonboat. Please respect all property by refraining from littering, blocking gates or access roads, and from camping in prohibited areas.



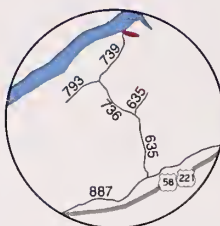
Soc Clay

Floating the New River

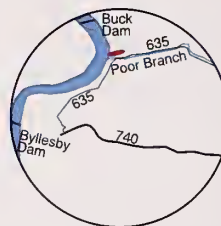
ADDITIONAL INFORMAL CAR TOP LANDINGS



G
FRIES DAM
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



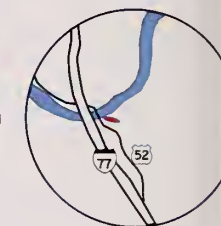
I
RIVERHILL
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



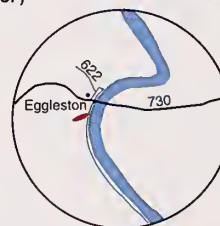
J
FOWLER'S FERRY
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



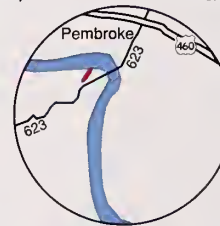
K
AUSTINVILLE
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



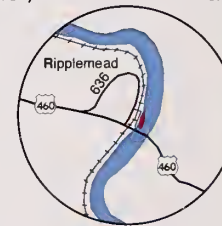
L
JACKSON FERRY
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



S
EGGLESTON
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



T
PEMBROKE
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)

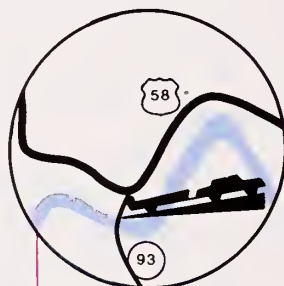


U
RIPPLEMEAD
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)

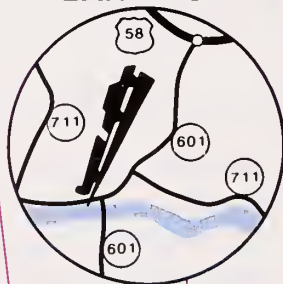


V
BLUFF
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)

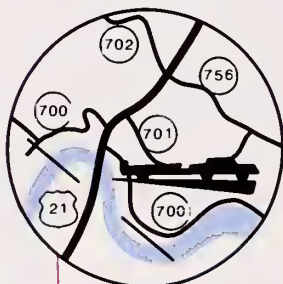
MOUTH OF WILSON LANDING CAR TOP ONLY



**BRIDLE CREEK
LANDING**



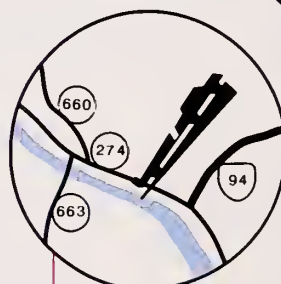
INDEPENDENCE LANDING



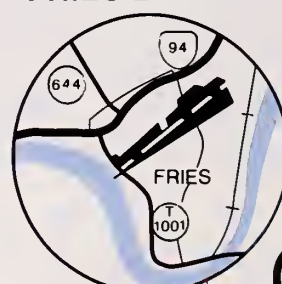
BAYWOOD LANDING



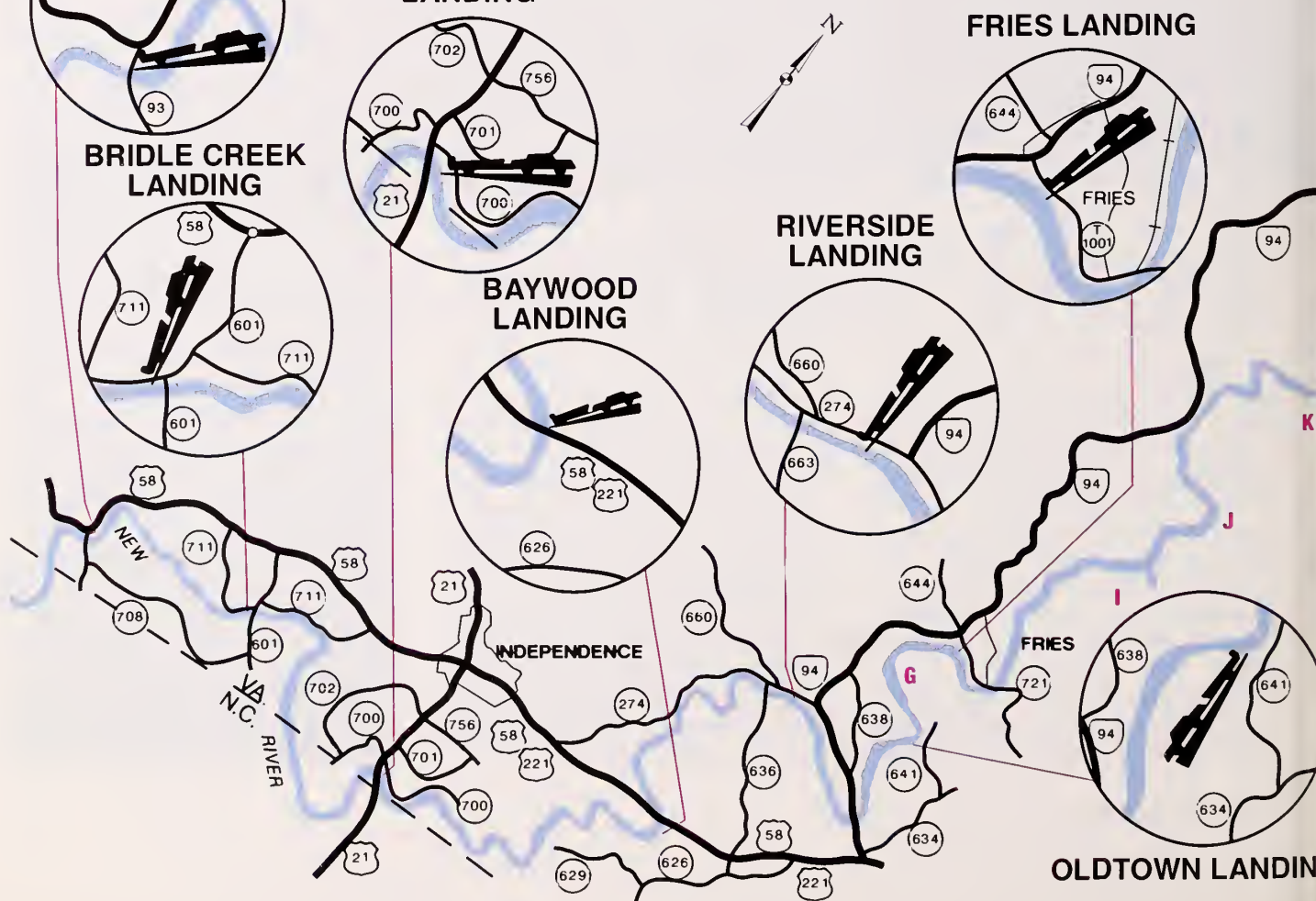
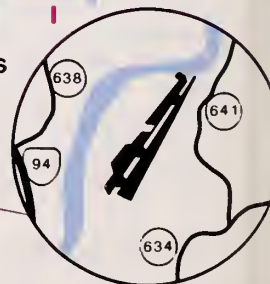
RIVERSIDE LANDING



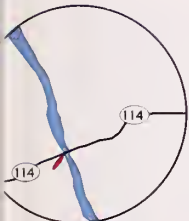
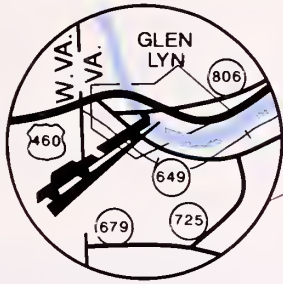
FRIES LANDING



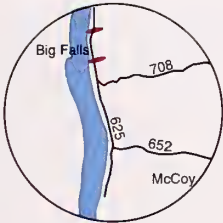
OLDTOWN LANDING



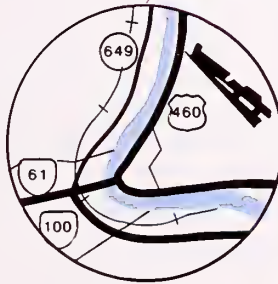
GLEN LYN LANDING



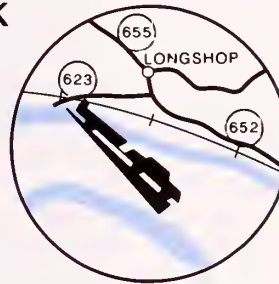
P
PEPPERS FERRY
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



R
BIG FALLS
(INFORMAL
CARTOP)



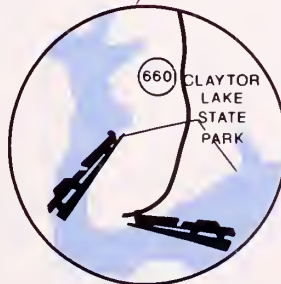
**RICH CREEK
LANDING**



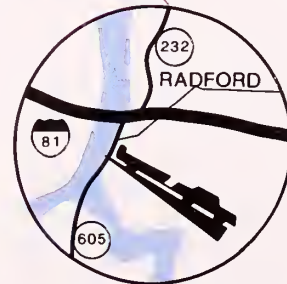
**WHITETHORNE
LANDING**



ALLISONIA LANDING



**CLAYTOR LAKE
STATE PARK
LANDING**



**CLAYTOR DAM
LANDING**

Mouth of Wilson to Bridle Creek

6 miles

This cartop launch can be accessed on the west bank of the river near the intersection of Routes 93 and 58. A one-mile backwater from Fields Dam, an old woolen mill, immediately greets the boater after launching. Portage the dam on the left side before continuing your journey to Bridle Creek. The slow water above Fields Dam yields good catches of smallmouth bass and muskellunge. With the entry of Fox Creek just below the dam, an occasional trophy brown or rainbow trout can be hooked in the New River. Easy riffles and scenic countryside can be experienced on this float. Take out on the left bank prior to the Route 601 crossing at Bridle Creek.

Bridle Creek to Independence

10 miles

Bridle Creek landing can be located off Route 601, about 1.5 miles south of the community of Bridle Creek. For those looking to challenge their whitewater skills, try this float. The New River spills over four sets of ledges to create some pulse-quickenning Class II and III rapids. For those who prefer to bypass such action, Penitentiary Shoals should be portaged on the left and Big Island Falls (near the North Carolina line) can be portaged from the right side. Fast water and big rock outcroppings always spell big smallmouth bass and flathead catfish. Take the opportunity to pull your craft up on a cobble bar or an island and fish with jigs or spinnerbaits around the ample structure. Exit the river on the left side just under the Route 21 bridge.

Independence to Baywood

12 miles

This launch area is found about 3 miles south of the town of Independence off of Route 21. This is a long, lazy float that passes through some beautiful hill country. Be sure to get an early start or you will be doing more paddling than fishing. Short easy riffles and a few sharp ledges

characterize all of the fast water you will experience in this reach. Try casting into the numerous pockets for lively spotted bass action and near the grass beds for rock bass fun. Takeout is on the right side of the river just under the Route 58 bridge.



Dwight Dyke



Dwight Dyke

Top: Narrow Falls is encountered on the Bluff City to Rich Creek float trip. It is a Class III rapid that should be scouted seriously before attempting to run it. Above: New River in Giles County.

Baywood to Riverside

8.5 miles

Baywood can be reached from either Galax or Independence via Route 58. This is a quiet float, as the New River winds around old Indian settlements and tobacco farms. Around 2 miles above takeout, Joyce's Rapids appear, challenging the boater and providing some out-

standing smallmouth bass opportunities. Be sure to fish the cool waters of Elk Creek where it joins the New River directly above the takeout. For those who want a longer float, be sure to check out camping opportunities in the vicinity of Riverside.

Riverside to Oldtown

6 miles

A wide channel, big islands, and grassy backwaters typify this stretch. Be sure to probe around the islands for musky, smallmouth bass, and flathead catfish. Your trip can be cut in half by taking out at a popular

cartop spot on the south side of the Route 94 bridge. Check out local guide service for camping and boating opportunities. The Oldtown landing is accessed on the right bank, 2 miles past the Route 94 bridge.



Dwight Dyke



Dwight Dyke

Dave Vicenzi (top) of the New River Canoe Livery in Pembroke is one of many outfitters to be found along the New River who can help you plan an enjoyable float/camping trip there. The Historical Shot Tower State Park (above) is not to be missed as a side trip when floating the Austinville to Jackson Ferry section of the New. Above right: Hybrid striped bass abound in the 4,500-acre Claytor Lake.

Oldtown to Fries Dam

2.5 miles

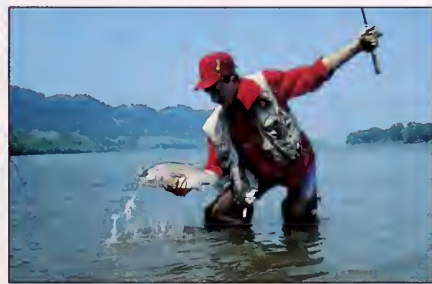
The second man-made barrier across the New River in Virginia is Fries Dam, a 40-foot rock structure that used to power a thriving textile mill. Be sure to look for signs and

blue barrels strung across the river to warn boaters of impending danger. The power pool above the dam harbors fish species that like quiet water: largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, and an occasional musky. Portage the dam on the left bank, following a foot trail up to a public wayside off Route 94.

Fries to Riverhill

7 miles

Launch at the VDGIF boat landing at Riverside Park in the town of Fries. A broad river channel and loads of ledges and rock structure greet the boater at the landing. If you can pick your way up to Fries Dam (1/2 mile upstream), sharp rock ledges and deep currents produce trophy smallmouth bass and channel catfish. This type of fish habitat is fairly consistent in this reach until the slow waters of the next dam, Byllesby, are encountered just below the confluence of Chestnut Creek. These waters can be jigged or live bait fished for big flatheads and channel catfish, as well as walleye and smallmouth bass. An occasional brown or rainbow trout can be landed near the mouth of Crooked Creek, which enters the New River just downstream of the launch site.



Soc Clay

Leave the river about 1 mile above the Byllesby Dam at an informal site at the end of Route 739 near Riverhill.

Fowler's Ferry

2.5 miles

This is a short piece of water, sandwiched in between two small hydroelectric dams at Buck and Byllesby. Beautiful bluffs, scattered islands, and rock ledges characterize this area. Nice stringers of channel catfish are taken near the base of

Byllesby Dam, while smallmouth bass, spotted bass, and musky also abound throughout the entire reach. Plan to paddle back to Fowler's Ferry or to prepare for a long, left bank portage around Buck Dam.

Fowler's Ferry to Austinville

7.5 miles

After working your way around Buck Dam, prepare for a scenic float through a bit of history. The area around Ivanhoe and Austinville were extensively mined for lead (for the manufacture of lead shot) in the 1800s. Today, the landscape is dotted with cabbage farms, small towns, and towering cliffs. For the boater, easy water lies ahead. Striped bass make their way all the way to the foot of Buck Dam, and the many deep pools in this reach yield trophy catfish, musky, and walleye. Again, trout are caught occasionally near the mouth of another premier trout stream that enters the New River: Cripple Creek. Takeout is an informal cartop site near the Route 636 bridge at Austinville.

Austinville to Jackson Ferry

3.5 miles

This is a short but scenic float trip. New River Trail State Park hugs the river here and provides a nice, but steep spot to end your trip, directly under the Route 52 bridge on the right bank. A deep, slow pool of water under the old steel bridge is sure to harbor lunker musky and channel catfish. Be sure to visit historical Shot Tower State Park before leaving the vicinity of Jackson Ferry.

Jackson Ferry to Allisonia

13.5 miles

Prepare for a long, but eventful, trip if you want to tackle this reach. About a mile after launching, the roar of Fosters Falls can be distinctly heard. This Class III-IV rapid should be scouted and/or portaged from the left shore. The Fosters Falls area contains numerous rock gardens and sharp ledges—home to big smallmouth and spotted bass. Downstream, beach your watercraft on one of the many small islands and fish the deep runs for walleye,

white bass, and catfish. Closer to Allisonia, the New River begins to slow and you begin to enter the deep waters of Claytor Lake. Take advantage of the cool water being supplied by Big Reed Island Creek, just above the landing. A nice, 20-car parking area and concrete ramp is available at Allisonia for those that prefer to do a little outboard motor-ing.

Claytor Lake

21 miles in length

Claytor Lake is a 4,500-acre hydroelectric facility, built in 1939 by Appalachian Power Company. Two major boat landings, one owned by VDGIF and one by Claytor Lake State Park, are located close to Claytor Dam on the north side of the lake. The 472-acre Claytor Lake State Park also has four campgrounds, cottages, a marina, and hiking trails. Claytor Lake has an array of game-fish species to satisfy the needs of any freshwater angler. Striped bass, hybrid stripers, white bass, walleye, smallmouth bass, spotted bass, largemouth bass, black crappie, yellow perch, channel catfish, and a variety of sunfish lurk below the rocky cliffs of the lake. Walleye run up river as early as February and white bass make their annual spawning runs in April and May. Boats with outboard motors are recommended to navigate the waters of Claytor Lake.

Claytor Dam to Peppers Ferry

11 miles

Launch on the east bank off of state Route 605 after passing under Interstate 81. Maneuver up to Claytor Dam to take advantage of some great smallmouth bass, spotted bass, and flathead catfish angling. Be sure to fish the mouth of Little River as it enters New River directly below the dam. Water conditions from this landing to the West Virginia line can change rapidly (2-3 feet rise in a short period of time) when power is being generated at the dam. Be sure not to camp too close to the shore or get caught wading in mid-river when APCO is releasing water. This is a relatively mild float with no major rapids and

modest scenery. Exit the river on the left just above the Route 114 bridge at Peppers Ferry.

Peppers Ferry to Whitethorne

8.5 miles

Informal put-in at the Route 114 bridge. The river slowly winds around tall cliffs, residential development, and the Radford Army Ammunition Plant. Scattered ledges and easy riffles characterize much of this float. Boaters beware of a Class II drop known as Arsenal Rapids. This rapid should be scouted and/or portaged on the right bank. Fishing opportunities include the usual river fish assemblage, including a few largemouth bass, black crappie, and channel catfish that have made their way out of Claytor Lake. Takeout is at Whitethorne, a developed VDGIF boat landing on the right side of New River.

Whitethorne to Big Falls

7 miles

Put in at the end of state Route 623 at Whitethorne and proceed down some of the best white water below Claytor Lake. This section is punctuated with several small

soon as the New River leaves Montgomery County and flows into Giles County (approximately 5 miles), it roars over a 2-foot ledge known as Big Falls. Take out along state Route 625 above or below the falls. This is a Class II-III run depending on water conditions. This is a popular tubing and swimming spot for students from Virginia Tech and Radford University, so expect a lot of activity in the river during the warm months.

Big Falls to Eggleston

2.5 miles

This beautiful reach is typified by towering cliffs, deep pools, and a few challenging riffles. One difficult rock ledge is located on the right side of an island one mile above the Eggleston bridge. Anglers can expect to catch big muskellunge in this section. Some of the largest catches of this popular game fish have come from the area between Whitethorne and Eggleston. Be sure to cast large plugs or use adult chubs to increase your chances of landing a trophy musky. Smallmouth bass, spotted bass, and flathead catfish fishing is outstanding as well. Take out on left



Dwight Dyke

ledges and riffles. Smallmouth action in this reach is nothing short of fabulous. It is not uncommon to hook several bronzebacks in the 2-4 pound class while using hellgrammites, jigs, or crayfish imitations. As

A one-mile backwater from Fields Dam, an old woolen mill, greets the boater immediately after launching at Mouth of Wilson where smallmouth bass and muskies are plentiful. Portage the dam on the left side before continuing your journey.

bank just before the Eggleston bridge (Route 730) along Route 622.

Eggleston to Pembroke

6 miles

This is a short but beautiful float. Towering palisades line the water's edge as the boater drifts slowly through the bends in the river. Short riffle areas are interspersed through this reach, inviting the angler to beach their craft and try flycasting a wooly bugger into the swirling pockets and runs. Take out off state Route 623, on the left side below the steel bridge.

Pembroke to Ripplemead

2 miles

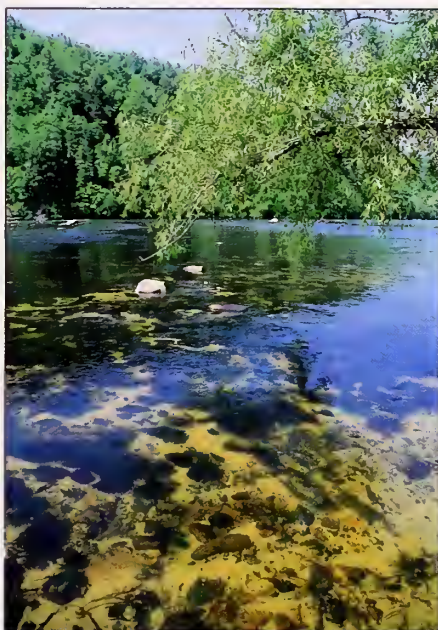
The outstanding scenery continues through this short piece of the New River. The serenity offered by the rushing water and high cliffs is occasionally interrupted by the rumble of a passing coal train on the Norfolk & Western line. Walker Creek, a notable tributary, enters the New River about halfway through the trip. Several small islands dot the channel, offering a good opportunity to stretch and fish for rock bass and smallmouth bass in and around

the channels. Fishing below the many small ledges can be productive as well. Take out off state Route 636 on the left bank, just under the Route 460 bridge.

Ripplemead to Bluff City

7.5 miles

Be on your toes for some white-water action after entering the river



Dwight Dyke

the confluence of Big Stony Creek. Clendennin Shoals, located near the town of Pearisburg, is the strongest rapid found in this float. The big waves and strong current can provide some excellent opportunities to land a big smallmouth bass or a monster flathead catfish. Bragging-size muskellunge can also be caught in the deep holes. Take out on the left side of the river below the Route 460 bridge near Bluff City.

Bluff City to Rich Creek

5.5 miles

Flat water dominates this run. Several small ledges and rock gardens can be handled easily, but beware of Narrows Falls, located below the town of Narrows. This is a Class III rapid that should be scouted thoroughly before attempting to run it. Narrows Falls drops around 7 feet in 50 feet of river. An old, crumbled dam at the end of the run forms several hydraulics that can be lethal to unsuspecting boaters. Fish the confluence of Wolf Creek at Narrows for smallmouth bass, rock bass, musky, and catfish. Take out at the VDGIF landing on the right bank just below Narrows Falls.

Rich Creek to Glen Lyn

5 miles

This is a gentle float, interrupted by a few short riffles and several large islands. The VDGIF Rich Creek landing is located at a beautiful, small park on the right-hand side, just above the Route 460 bridge. Take the kids on this short float and introduce them to the joys of float fishing. Catches of smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish, and rock bass can be expected in this reach of the New River. Around 7 miles of the New River flow through Virginia before leaving the state, but finding a takeout can be difficult. Paddling the slow waters of Blue-stone Lake when it is at full pond is not desirable either, so many boaters consider Glen Lyn to be the final stop on the scenic New River in Virginia. □



Dwight Dyke

The gentle float from Rich Creek (above) to Glen Lyn is a perfect 5-mile trip to introduce the kids to the joys of float fishing. **Top:** The New River is unsurpassed for its lovely vistas, clear water, and terrific fishing.

at Ripplemead. A Class II rapid awaits approximately one mile from the put-in, followed by several more ledges that produce great canoeing fun. A long series of Class II riffles and ledges are located a mile below

VDGIF fisheries biologist supervisor Paul Bugas and fisheries technician Daniel Garren both work out of the Verona regional office.

THE HUNT BEGINS... TODAY



Bill Lea

Hunting season for white-tailed deer may not be open officially for over two more months, but preseason scouting is the essential first step in hunting—and it begins today.

by Gerald Almy

I had seen the buck's fresh rubs on the saplings along the thinly-worn trail early in the fall. Later, as frost covered the ground each night, a series of scrapes were cleared in the leaves along the ridge spine. After a night of feeding in the lowlands on corn, my hunch was

that the buck would take this route up, check out his scrapes, then bed in thick, steep cover above my location near the mountaintop.

And now, at 7 a.m. on opening day, the deer was doing just that. I had never seen him before, but as the scope settled on his shoulder, I saw seven points and slowly tightened my pressure on the trigger. When I went up to the deer, I found it was a heavy-bodied buck, a definite trophy for public hunting land.

Was taking that deer in the first 30 minutes of the open season "luck?" It's impossible to say with certainty how much of a role luck played in bagging that buck, or almost any deer that's harvested. Of course, if you simply walk into a new hunting area on opening day, sit down on a stump and have a buck amble into shooting range, everyone would agree that's lucky. But such fairy-tale events rarely happen in reality.

Over 25 years of deer hunting, I've found that the "luckiest" hunters are the ones who spend the most time in the woods and fields scouting and being involved in their sport before the season opens.

ry when the season opens.

If you can sit still, watch the woods intensely and shoot straight, deer hunting is not that difficult. It's the preseason scouting that is the real challenge. All the preliminary study, field research and head-scratching that goes into unraveling the puzzle of whitetail behavior is when the hunting really begins.

Preseason scouting has another advantage, too. It brings your mind and senses back into tune with nature's relaxed pace. Instead of blocking out so much that goes on around us as we do during daily life in cities and suburbs, where far too much sensory stimulation is going on to observe and absorb it all, you will begin to really see, hear and smell again during these trips into the woods and fields before the hunt. That renewed perceptiveness and awareness is vital for success once the season rolls in.

I consider preseason scouting a three-part operation. The first step is choosing the hunting area. The second is searching for sign and learning the lay of the land and topography through footwork and map

vorite public land area you go to. If you don't have a spot, consult with game biologists, wardens, get maps of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries wildlife management areas and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, and pin down several potential areas close enough to be convenient to hunt. The military bases are another good option for hunters in the piedmont section of the state.

You can also simply drive back-country roads and look for areas that appear to be good habitat and check with landowners to see if you can hunt. If approached politely well before the season, some will allow hunting. Others may charge a fee. And, of course, many will say no simply because they hunt it themselves or have friends who do.

Once you've pinned down a couple of possible areas, take a day off and scout them by driving back roads and walking. If they look promising with good habitat, including cover and food, and at least some deer sign is present, buy a topographic map of the smallest scale available then plan a return visit

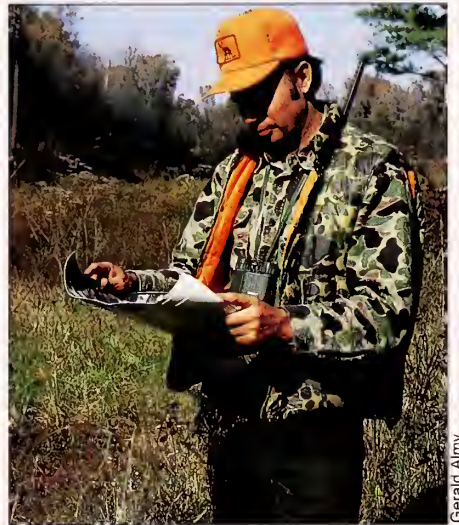


Bill Lea

The fact is, deer are creatures of habit and instinct, and they can be patterned. The more you know about the area you are hunting and which parts of it have different types of cover, food, terrain and vegetation, the better equipped you will be to choose the very best stand location possible and intercept the quar-

study. The third and most crucial step is analyzing what you've discovered and using it to pattern the animal's movements and choose your best stand locations.

Choosing the hunting area is not necessary if you already own private land you hunt, belong to a club that leases property, or have a fa-



Gerald Almy

Over 25 years of hunting has convinced the author that the "luckiest" hunters are those who spend the most time in the woods scouting before the season opens. They learn the animals' movements, patterns, and behavior in their hunting areas long before opening day arrives.

with map in hand.

Topo maps show streams, trails, ponds, open areas, forests, cliffs and changes in elevation that often influ-

ence deer movement. They also help you find your way around while scouting, with the aid of a compass. The final thing I use a topo for is to record important deer sign and insights regarding the animals' patterns of movement. With enough scouting and interpretive information on it, the topo becomes your blueprint for deer hunting success.

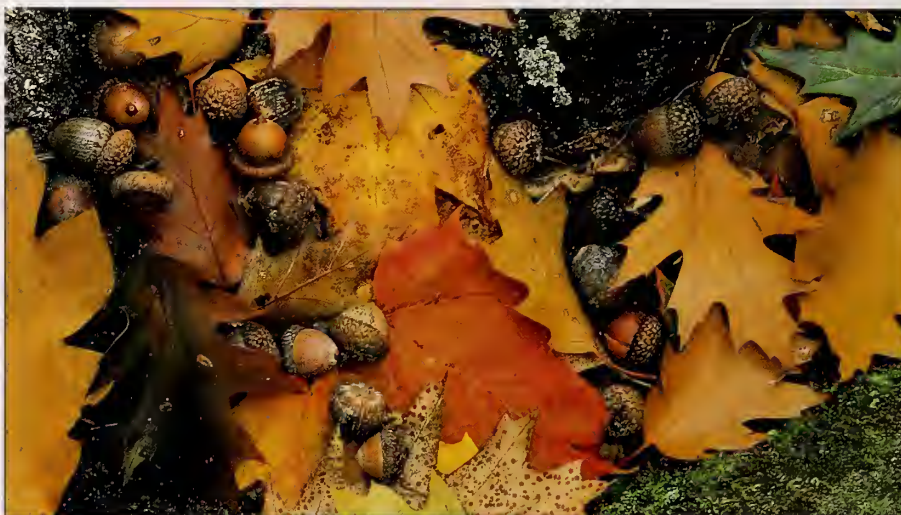
It is almost impossible to learn a hunting area too thoroughly. Some people worry about spooking deer out of the area. But that is not likely to happen. A deer has its chosen home range and is not going to vacate because someone walks quietly through it several times before the hunting season. To help ensure that you don't alarm the animals excessively, try to do most of your actual walking during midday when the deer are most likely bedded down in thick cover. In morning and evenings, stay back on a high knoll or ridge and glass with binoculars to see if you can pattern the deer's movements without getting right down among them.

As you hike through the area on midday scouting expeditions, use a systematic approach. Work up one hollow, then down another, or walk along a ridge spine, then drop down a ways and take another swath back slightly down the mountainside. You want to walk most of the hunting territory searching for likely bedding areas of thick or rugged terrain, escape areas where deer might flee from hunting pressure on surrounding lands, areas where foods are abundant, such as corn fields, orchards, large amounts of acorns, hawthorn berries, soybeans or clover. In some remote, lightly hunted areas, or during early bow seasons you may be able to hunt the actual food sources. Other times you'll want to study the edges of these areas and backtrack along trails leading into them before choosing a stand site. This way you'll be more likely to see the animals early in the morning and just before dark when they head in to do their major feeding at night.

Mark down areas with rubs where a buck scraped its antlers



Bill Lea



Bill Lea

Deer sign is so very important when selecting the perfect stand. Noting scrapes in October or November where a buck has pawed out the leaves and urinated on the ground (top), deer droppings (middle right), browse lines (top right), or heavily used deer trails (bottom right) are key to locating deer. Noting areas with good mast production, such as acorns (above), will also help you map out the comings and goings of these cunning animals.

against a sapling and stripped off the bark, particularly if there is a line of them. Just one rub doesn't mean much. But if you find a series of them, it indicates a buck has used that area more than once and it might be a regular travel route. I've taken several deer that were actually rubbing their antlers when I made my shot.

Heavily used deer trails and intersections should be marked. Also look for more lightly outlined trails with large tracks in them just off to the side from the major trails. These are often where the buck travels while following a group of does, rather than right with them.

Mark on your topo spots where you see oval depressions in leaves or grass where deer have bedded. If these are in open fields and exposed areas, they aren't particularly important, because the deer likely just used them briefly during the night. However, if you find beds in thick or rugged cover, they are likely daytime hangouts and good spots to hunt near early or late.

If you sight a buck, also mark that spot. Chances are the area is part of the animal's regular travel route. Note the exact time of day you saw it, its size and what direction it was traveling. This will help you determine where the animal was likely

headed and when would be a good time to intercept it there in the future.

Edges are also worth looking for and noting on your map. Areas where brush and mature forest, field and swamp, conifer and evergreen, and other different types of vegetation or habitat join are good bets for a stand if sign is plentiful. Another area I like to check out for sign is a creek bottom. Deer often use these areas for travel lanes. Food is usually abundant and bucks in particular seem to like these riparian habitats.

Be on the lookout for natural funnels, too. These are spots where the lay of the land forces deer to move through narrow passages. A funnel

may be where several ridges merge to form a single peak, where rockslides or a river forces deer to take a certain route, where two patches of woods are joined by a ribbon of brushy cover in open terrain, or where a strip of brush joins two fields. If good sign is present, these can be very likely stand locations.

You can look for scrapes on early scouting trips, but most won't be made until October or November. These are cleared oval areas on the ground where a buck has pawed out the leaves and debris and urinated over its tarsal glands to leave scent that will attract does in heat and also mark its breeding territory. Make a note of scrapes on your topo, describing their freshness and the date they were discovered.

For hunting in eastern Virginia where there are fewer hills and no mountains, you'll need to use a compass more intensively than in western mountainous habitat. Use it to chart your course as you look for swampy cover or dense underbrush that's likely used as bedding or escape areas.

In the Appalachians, Alleghenies and Blue Ridge, animals display a different pattern. They tend to feed low and move up the mountain to bed in higher, more remote terrain early in the morning. Roads are also often more abundant in eastern Virginia as well, so you'll want to study topos carefully when searching for escape areas to find spots that offer plenty of dense cover and are far enough from vehicle access to hold bucks pushed by hunters coming in from roads.

As you move into the third stage of preseason scouting and begin interpreting the sign, topography features, map notations and just plain "hunches," do a bit more scouting at dawn and dusk. Check out those areas that seem like they're good stand possibilities by getting in before daylight and making a dry run "hunt" without a weapon. Also watch from late afternoon until dark, either on stand or from a distance with binoculars. You don't want to do this too often before the season opens, but a couple of early

and late scouting trips are required to see if your hunches are correct and check out the animal's movements at peak travel times. This will also give you a final feel for what stage the rut is in. Are the bucks' necks swollen? Are they trailing does with their noses to the ground? Or is their interest more casual and likely to peak later?

Of course, some patterns you won't be able to see on preseason trips, like the movement of bucks to escape cover when opening day of firearms season arrives. You simply have to find thick, swampy or rugged cover that's half a mile or more from nearby parking areas, with fresh sign present and figure these areas are definitely going to draw deer when the main group of hunters enter the woods near roads at first light on the opener.

The final interpretation of what you've learned from your scouting trips and choice of stand sites is the most exciting part of preseason planning. But by the time you've done your homework and field research, these spots actually are almost obvious.

If deer are in the peak of the rut, a stand downwind of several freshly pawed-out patches of ground will likely be a good choice. Is a particular part of the woods thick with acorns and torn up by deer hooves? If so, it's an excellent stand site. An abandoned apple orchard may be fine during bow season, but by the time the gun opener arrives, it may not be a good choice. Does a saddle, crossing, or edge area with abundant sign seem the best stand location? A creek bottom or thick escape area? All of these are questions you'll have to answer before making the final choice from among the potential stand sites you've pinpointed. But if you do enough detective work before opening day rolls in, chances are any of your top choices will be worth watching as the first sliver of orange sun illuminates the woods on that magical opening day of the season. □

Gerald Almy has been a full-time outdoor writer for over 19 years. He is currently a hunting and fishing editor on the staff of Sports Afield.



Bill Lea



Bill Lea



Bill Lea

Keeping Sharp on Sq



by Bob Gooch

I would have to shoot offhand, something I rarely do with a rifle. But this was plains country, big open country all but devoid of trees. Not even a convenient boulder was close by where I could cushion my rifle and rest it for a steady shot. I had made a successful stalk on the nice buck antelope. I was within easy rifle range, but time was limited. The critter was already edgy. No time to even assume a steadier sitting position.

Suddenly the rifle was at my shoulders, the safety off, and the crosshairs of the scope settled just behind the animal's shoulder. The trigger squeeze followed—automatically. The antelope bolted at the shot, but I knew it wouldn't go far.

Even so, I had worked the bolt, and another round was waiting there in the chamber if needed. It wasn't.

As I sit here now in the comfort of my den and reflect on that hunt, I realize that I had been training for that moment for many years—right here

*Hunting squirrels is
excellent training for
the big-game
season ahead.*

in Virginia on frisky little grey squirrels. Every move I made was second nature, from the time I first spotted the antelope and began the stalk, until I cranked that second bullet into the chamber of my big-bore

rifle. They were moves made so often during years of hunting squirrels in Virginia hardwoods that they had become second nature, automatic, honed keen like the skills of a well-trained soldier.

Squirrel hunting can do that for you.

Let's begin with the rifle. I hunt squirrels almost exclusively with a little .22 caliber rifle. My first one, ordered from a mail-order house many years ago, was a simple little single shot, but it was a bolt action. I didn't know it then, but that inexpensive little rifle would serve as a training tool for big-game hunting to come later in life.

It taught me a lot about hunting with a rifle. The desire to bag squirrels with a fair degree of consistency dictated that I master that little

uirrels



Bill Lea

The skills you learn while hunting squirrels in Virginia will hold you in good stead when you move on to big-game animals. Learning to read sign (like searching for food sources such as hickory nuts, right), stalk effectively, choose a rest, master a trigger squeeze, and even shoot offhand when necessary (below right) are vital in pursuing big game successfully.

firearm. Rifle shooting is precision shooting, and a squirrel is a small target. You have to be right on, or all you'll get is a miss. You aim a rifle, but I grew up in a shotgun family where you point instead of aim. I had to break some old habits. Hunting squirrels helped me accomplish that.

I'm not sure whether someone told me, I read it somewhere, or it simply came by trial and error, but I discovered that by controlling my breathing I could steady my shooting. There isn't time in hunting for the military "take a deep breath, let out half of it, and hold" rifle range

approach, but any control of breathing contributes to shooting accuracy.

So does a good rest. There is rarely a shortage of rests in the squirrel woods. All you need is the nearest tree against which you can clamp the rifle barrel with your hand. There's a catch here, however. The mild percussion of the little .22 doesn't create a problem, but when you later shift to big-bore rifles, you have to cushion that rest. Otherwise, the shot is going to be way off. Still, squirrel hunting teaches the value of a good rest for the rifleman. You learn it early and it will stay with you as long as you hunt.

In spite of the value of a rest for your rifle, there will be times when you will have to shoot without one—as was the case with that antelope. A squirrel may catch you in midstride, for example, and there simply isn't time to move to the nearest tree. Do so and that squirrel is long gone. You somehow get control of your breathing, center the crosshairs on the animal's midriff, hope you are on, and shoot quickly. It has worked for me often in the squirrel woods and it was all but automatic when the time came for that antelope shot.

Working the bolt of a rifle can be a hangup for hunters accustomed to automatic shotguns. Practice in the squirrel woods can help with that. My first squirrel rifle was a single shot, so working the bolt didn't become a subconscious move. I had to reload before working the bolt. Later I bought a clip-loaded .22 and that did wonders in training to work the bolt on big-game rifles I would shoot later.

Fortunately, I learned early in my hunting life the value of familiarity with a bolt-action rifle. As a consequence, I stuck with bolt actions as I built my battery of rifles. All are bolt action from a couple of little .22s up to my big-bored .30/.06. All are also topped with cross-hair scopes. I often shoot a .22 Magnum rimfire bolt action for woodchucks, but sometimes switch off to a .243. It, too, is a bolt action. But the little .22s and squirrels keep my moves sharp with those bolt-action rifles.

The average hunter just doesn't shoot his big-game rifle enough to maintain the familiarity that brings comfort with it. Some years I sight in with a couple of rounds and take my deer with another. That's only a trio of shots during a 12-month period. Your reactions don't stay in tune with that kind of shooting. I depend upon my squirrel hunting for that.

Over the years I've stalked all kinds of game, but my earliest stalking lessons go back to those early squirrel hunts. Just as in deer hunting, the squirrel hunter has the option of stand-hunting or still-hunting. Or stalking if you prefer. Which you choose depends upon a number of things. The time of day, for example. Early in the morning you can wait for a squirrel at a hickory tree—or for an antelope at a waterhole. In either case, to be successful you learn about camouflage and concealment—and you learn to relax and wait quietly.

It is in still-hunting or stalking



Bill Lea



Lloyd B. Hill

that sessions in the squirrel woods pay big dividends for the big game hunter. You move quietly and as inconspicuously as possible when trying to get within .22 rifle range of a squirrel. You do the same thing when attempting to approach a feeding antelope, deer, or elk. All are tough to stalk. You try to put cover between yourself and the squirrel. It might be the trunk of a giant oak for a squirrel, but it's more likely to be a boulder for elk. I took advantage of a rise in the otherwise flat land while stalking within range of that antelope.

You also learn to keep your eye on a squirrel as much as possible and move when it is feeding, freeze if it becomes alert. You can get within range of a mule deer that same way; with caution and a good deal of patience.

I'm not sure that the squirrel's sense of smell is of much consequence, but its hearing is excellent. For that reason, it pays to hunt squirrels into the wind so that any noise you make will be carried in the opposite direction—away from the quarry. The same is true of big-game hunting; in fact, it's probably much more so, as the sense of smell is a first line of defense for deer and other big-game animals.

The squirrel's vision is sharp. That's another sense you learn to deal with, a lesson that will serve you well in big-game hunting. This is made doubly so in this age of hunter or blaze orange. Wearing of the orange is mandatory during the firearms deer season in Virginia—for all kinds of hunting except waterfowl. True, much of the squirrel season falls outside of the deer season, the very best of it, in fact—the October hunting. But even then there are other hunters in the woods much of the year—grouse hunters, for example, bowhunters, and even deer hunters during the primitive weapons season. The wearing of limited blaze orange is a good idea even if it's not mandatory, particularly on public lands. Sure, it's a handicap, but life is more important than hunting success.

By limiting the movement of the blaze orange as much as possible, a

hunter can minimize the handicap. This means being careful with blaze orange gloves, caps or hats, parts of the clothing subject to the most movement. Generally I limit blaze orange to a vest except during the deer season. The torso doesn't move much when you are on a stand or stand quietly waiting for a squirrel to settle down after being alerted. Such practice with blaze orange can do wonders for big-game hunting.

No game in Virginia is more abundant or more available to so many hunters than squirrels. During years of low mast crops the populations tend to decline, but give them two good mast years in succession and the populations all but explode.

Every county in Virginia and most cities have good squirrel populations. Many of the city populations are not available to hunters, but most of the counties offer hunting. Much of it is on private land where permission to hunt is needed, but there are also millions of acres of public land that offer good squirrel hunting. Probably the best public hunting is found on the two big national forests, the Jefferson and George Washington National Forests. The wildlife management areas owned and managed for hunting by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries offer thousands of acres of squirrel hunting. So do the military reservations. I've enjoyed some excellent squirrel hunting on the Quantico Marine Corps Reservation.

There are several things to look for when in search of likely squirrel hunting. Probably most important is a hardwood forest. It should boast a mature stand of hardwoods, particularly mast-bearing hickories and oak. Beechnuts are also good. Also, look for the edges between stands of hardwood and pines. During low mast years, squirrels like the comfort of dens in hollow oaks. But they invade those pine forests to feed on the seeds of pine cones.

A hardwood ridge. Ahhh...that's a gold mine for a squirrel hunter. Generations of Virginia youngsters have learned the basics of hunting on hardwood ridges across the state.

Ridges are tough to log, and loggers usually leave them alone. Logging ridges also sets up a prime possibility for uncontrolled erosion. Left undisturbed, the oaks on those ridges grow to maturity and then live to ripe old ages. They produce bushels of acorns and offer hollows that can house dozens of squirrels through harsh Virginia winters. No wonder they are gold mines in the eyes of a squirrel hunter. Hunting the hardwood ridges can pay off later for deer, as some big old bucks like to run those ridges.

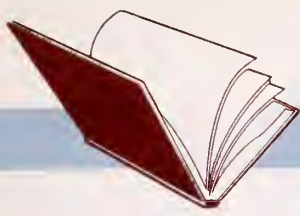
Squirrels are seldom deep-woods animals. They prefer the edges, and little is to be gained by hiking deep into one of the big national forests for squirrels—unless it is to escape other hunters. Learning to hunt the edges can prove helpful in other seasons for deer. Whitetails are also edge animals.

Squirrels, like many big game animals, are drawn to woodland streams for obvious reasons. Particularly during dry weather when other sources of water disappear, they frequent the streams to drink. The best way to hunt them then is by floating a stream in a canoe. It's lots of fun and teaches such hunting fundamentals as hugging the in-shore bend of a curve hoping to surprise game around the bend. Rifles cannot be fired from canoes in Virginia, however, and this limits that aspect of training for bigger game. It's still fun and productive with a shotgun, however, and that in itself is sufficient.

The truth is few squirrel hunters probably realize they are actually training for big game when they hunt squirrels in Virginia's hardwoods. That was not my goal when I first picked up that inexpensive little .22 rifle and headed for a favorite hardwood ridge. It wasn't until many years later that I realized I was unknowingly learning hunting techniques that would fare me well in later life as I switched to big game.

Most of us hunt squirrels for the pure joy of it, but the fact that we get sound big-game training in the process is a true bonus. □

Bob Gooch is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.



Journal

Trapper Training Workshop

The Virginia Trappers Association will conduct a Trapper Training Workshop hosted by VTA District 20 on August 20 and 21 at the Chesapeake Izaak Walton Club, 2131 Shipyard Road in Chesapeake.

The workshop is designed for new, aspiring trappers as well as the pros. It is planned for those who would like to learn about trapping and furbearer animal management fundamentals. The 8-hour course will include discussions, outdoor videos and hands-on demonstrations of the following subjects: trapping ethics and responsibilities, history of trapping, biology of wild furbearing animals, trapping regulations, making sets, trapping equipment and preparation (including foothold, conibears, snares and live traps), skinning, fur handling and marketing.

Participants need to come prepared to wade in water and dig in dirt. The field trip will consist of instructions on picking desirable trapping locations, locating furbearer habitat, and set preparations for both water and land animals. Species that will be covered are raccoon, mink, muskrat, beaver, otter, red and gray fox, bobcat, coyote and nutria.

The only charge for this course is your membership in either the Virginia or National Trappers Associations. Free primitive camping will be allowed on the grounds for those that wish. No firearms are allowed. Students completing the course will receive a certificate and copy of the 60-page *Virginia Trappers Manual*, a copy of the NTA Magazine, and a copy of the *Trapper and Predator Caller* magazine.

We have the club reserved for the two days, if we cannot cover everything you want to learn in one day. District 20 will furnish drinks. Bring your own lunch.

Interested persons should write:

Trapper Training
2132 Shipyard Rd
Chesapeake, VA 23323
804/487-1766

or

Dr. Charles Cushwa
Training Coordinator, South
Rt 1, Box 126A
Lynch Station, VA 23571
804/369-7022

Give your name, home address, phone number, and specify if you are an adult or student (if student, please give age.) □

Letters

I hope you will not be unduly influenced by those complaining sportsmen who feel that your publication should deal (almost) exclusively with hunting, fishing and trapping. Many of us are interested in all of Virginia's wildlife. We believe that by caring about the whole web of life, hunting and fishing will also be enhanced.

Your photo essays on selected regions of the state are treasures. I have saved each of these issues.

There are already magazines designed specifically for sportspeople. Please don't change one thing about *Virginia Wildlife*; the balance of articles is just right.

Majorie L. Browning
Dendron

I have to write you regarding the letters from Thomas Scanlan and B.L. Newcomb in your May issue. Contrary to Newcomb's assertion that he represents the opinions of sportsmen in general, his opinions are strictly his own. And quite near-sighted at that.

As an avid hunter and a dedicated fisherman, I thoroughly enjoy the diversity of your magazine. Your staff and the publication are World Class. There is no other magazine I know of, and I purchase my fair

share every month, which is dedicated to the natural world as yours is and does not cater to commercial interests. This is an honorable and much-needed service to our great state.

There has to be a realization among sportsmen that we must be on the forefront of conservation as we are the ones who are truly dedicated to its preservation. No other special interest group in this country invests the time, resources, and funds which outdoorsmen do to guarantee the preservation of our natural resources. Those resources are not limited simply to the black bear, white-tailed deer, or wild turkey. There has to be room also for the canebrake rattlesnake and the Delmarva fox squirrel, and the myriad of endangered species which need our help to secure their future. The future of our wildlife reflects our own questionable future. We must be dedicated to the welfare of our natural world; as humans we tend to forget that we are members of that world. As sportsmen we can never forget that fact. It is our reason for doing what we love to do.

The environmental hoopla to which Mr. Newcomb refers belongs to us, the sportsmen. And if a hoopla should be made about our damaged ecosystems, who better to raise a stink? Reassess your reasons for being a sportsman, Mr. Newcomb. If your only interest lies in harvesting game and fish, and not in preserving the environment which provided this cherished bounty, then take your money somewhere else, because true sportsmen do not need your money or want you raping our resources.

Find that time to give back a little of what you take; supporting *Virginia Wildlife* is a good place to start. And, by the way, every bow season I hug many trees putting in and taking out stands. I kind of like it; you might give it a try.

Keep up the good work, *Virginia Wildlife*. There are far more of us that truly love your magazine than there are Newcombs. I'm hooked for life.

William M. LeBleu
Sandston

Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show

The Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show is scheduled for August 12-14 at the Showplace, 3000 Mechanicsville Turnpike in Richmond.

This year, a trophy gobbler contest will headline the event. Sponsored by Trebark Camouflage and judged by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the "Virginia Gobbler Classic" should draw turkey hunters from around the state. A \$10 entry fee will be required, with all proceeds being matched and donated to Hunters for the Hungry.

The contest will have 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners for typical and atypical (multiple beard gobblers) in each class. Hunters with gobblers harvested during the 1993-94 hunting season must produce a game check card to verify a legal kill.

The contest will also offer an Open Class for trophies taken from previous seasons. Scores will be determined by measuring the length of the turkey beard and spurs. The formula of 2X beard length and 10x length of spurs will be used for total score. Successful hunters with a total score of 40 points will be presented a "Boss Gobbler Citation."

All contestants will receive a weekend pass to the show for their entry. Deadline for registration in this contest will be 5 p.m. on Saturday, August 13th.

For additional information about the Virginia Gobbler Classic or the Outdoor Show, call Hugh Crittenden, Show Manager 804/748-7529 or Denny Quaiff, Executive Director Virginia Deer Hunters Association 804/743-1290. □

Game Warden Receives Army's Top Honors

Game Warden Todd Phillips was

recently selected as the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for the entire U.S. Army after rigorous competition involving 400,000 soldiers from around the country and six levels of competition.

Officer Phillips began his military career by serving in the U.S. Army from 1982-1986. In 1988, Phillips was employed as a Virginia Game Warden and assigned to James City County. He was transferred to Cumberland County in October 1992. Phillips joined the Virginia National Guard after leaving active duty, and is currently serving as a Staff Sergeant attached to the 2nd Battalion-116th Infantry in Lynchburg. He is Platoon Sergeant for a scout platoon.

The Noncommissioned Officer of the Year selection process begins at the platoon level involving 6-8 soldiers and culminates at the National Guard Bureau level. The competition consists of a thorough review of each candidate's service record, education, accomplishments, and community involvement. Each candidate is then interviewed by a review board to evaluate their skills in leadership, counseling, weapons, training soldiers under their command, and current events. □

Wintergreen Natural History Weekend

Where can you go to find information on the plants, animals, geology, and archeology and anthropology of Virginia? The first place most people search is the library. But few places typically available to the public house up-to-date sources on all of these subjects. The second source is people, such as college professors or local experts considered knowledgeable on one or more of these subjects. There is, however, no one place in Virginia you can go to learn about all the aspects of her natural history; that is, until now.

The Wintergreen Natural History Weekend is a two-day and two-night event held each fall in Virginia's well-known mountain resort. The retreat to be held this year on September 16-18 consists of some 18

lectures and 24 field trips given by the state's finest field scientists. Participants are able to select their own individual mix of slide lectures and field trips. Most trips are local and not too strenuous. The atmosphere, both physical and intellectual, is crisp and stimulating.

Nowhere else can you meet the people who are doing the most advanced research on Virginia's natural history. And nowhere else can you learn of the latest discoveries long before they are widely available to the public.

The participating scientists have donated their time to provide an unparalleled educational opportunity. These people are gold mines of information and here is a rare opportunity to meet and learn from them.

The program starts on Friday evening with a lecture on some new discoveries regarding Virginia's Piedmont Indians. Saturday is filled with hour-long lectures and field trips. The lectures range from the demise of Virginia's dinosaurs to the birth of the Potomac River basin, and the status of the state's mammal species.

Field trips start with neotropical birds and the geology of the Great Valley in the morning, nature photography, fall flora, and hawk watching in the day, and bats and other small mammals in the evening. A Saturday evening lecture is followed by an outstanding slide show of "Nature's Subtle Splendor" by well-known Richmond wildflower photographer Dr. Hal Horwitz. Lectures and field trips continue on Sunday.

Students can earn up to one semester hour of college credit by attending this event. Teachers can earn points toward recertification by participating, and Wintergreen Resort is offering special lodging rates for this event. The registration fee that includes all events and activities is only \$60.

Persons interested in attending the Natural History Weekend should contact Lorrie Knies at 804-325-2200, extension 992, as soon as possible. □



by Col. William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

Accidents are Accidental

Crash! A boat hits a dock. People are flung into the water. You witness the accident. Are you required to help? Yes! Failure to stop, render assistance and give name and address at the scene of an accident is unlawful. Of course, as a "Good Samaritan" your assistance is limited by your capabilities.

What about the boat operator? Is he required to report the accident? Yes! As the operator of a vessel he is required by law to file a formal written report of an accident with local law enforcement authorities or with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. The report may be made by mail.

Accidents are reportable if total property damage exceeds \$500 total boat loss, if there is an injury requiring more than first aid, if a person involved in the accident disappears or dies as a result of the accident. The accident report must normally be made within 10 days, but there is an exception to that rule which requires a report within 48 hours. The short reporting time is invoked when a person involved in the accident dies within 24 hours of the accident, is unable to perform normal activities, or disappears.

Reportable boating accidents include grounding, capsizing, falls overboard, collision, sinking, swamping, flooding, fire, explosion, death, disappearance and injury requiring more than first aid. The accident report form is usually completed by the boat operator unless that person is physically unable to fill it

out. In that case, the vessel owner (if a person other than the operator) or a boat passenger who was in the accident completes the form.

The Coast Guard Boating Accident Report Form and the state form are essentially the same and may be used in all cases of accident reporting. It is important to carry copies of the report form so that in case of an accident, all essential information will be obtained. Without a form to use as a reminder, important data may be overlooked and omitted.

Copies of boating accident report forms, information on state dollar damage reporting thresholds and other valuable boating safety information is available through the Coast Guard Hotline 1-800-368-5647 or the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) at 1-804-367-1000.

Accident report forms must be filed because the information supplied is used in accident reduction programs, safety regulations, and manufacturing standards for the benefit of the boating public. The data is also important for use in boating education programs, public service announcements on TV, radio and other media, plus magazine and newspaper articles. Without the knowledge derived from accident reports, boating hazards and unsafe practices might be overlooked, and other accidents, injuries and fatalities may occur.

Why do we have accidents? There are numerous reasons, but there is one which is paramount: the failure to have a proper lookout. Someone on the vessel must look all

around the boat, but with particular interest ahead, to determine what hazards exist, such as floating logs or other boats approaching from front or side.

Last year, there were 113 boating accidents in Virginia and about 75% of the boats involved collided with other boats or floating objects. Most were open motorboats with single engine outboards and were from 16 to 26 feet long. The operators were mostly between 21 and 40 years of age.

Despite an increase from 41,677 registered boats in 1963 to 206,000 in 1993, accidents per 10,000 registered boats have actually decreased from 21.6 to 2.0. It would appear that accidents per 10,000 boats would increase as the total number of boats proliferates because of the resultant congestion. It has not, perhaps because of the attention given to training boaters.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has over 500 volunteer instructors who taught over 24,000 students last year. Those were in addition to the large number taught in Virginia by The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons. There is no positive way to say how many boaters avoided accidents because of that annual training, but a recent survey of Virginia boaters conducted by VDGIF indicated that a majority of them were convinced that taking a boating course had helped them avoid one or more accidents. □

Photo TipS

By Lynda Richardson

The Trusty Tripod

Uh-oh. The loud crunch beneath the wheels of my truck didn't sound good. I sat for a moment to ponder whether I really wanted to check it out or not. What could I have possibly left out while packing photo equipment into the back? Was it my camera bag, my dearly beloved 500mm lens or...Uh-oh.

I jumped from the truck and ran around to the back. There, in the driveway, lay a bent and pitiful tripod, one of its legs fractured and dangling. It was not a pretty sight. As I stared in horror, it began to dawn on me that I was in more trouble than I thought. *This* was my husband's tripod.

I had to live through a lot of grief before the tripod was repaired. It seems "hubby" could never recall the time *he* broke my 200mm f2.8 lens in half...*twice* (and it's still broken). Nevertheless, it was during this crisis of having to share one tripod between us that I realized just how important a tripod is to my photography.

For a long time I never used a tripod. I thought they were for sissies. As I became more experienced and my lenses got bigger and heavier, I decided that maybe sissies had more on the ball than I thought. Depending on the type of photography you prefer, tripods can be a very important piece of equipment in your photo regalia.

A tripod is like having a third hand and that extra hand comes in real handy for any type of photography. Even if you only own a point-and-shoot camera, think about all those times when you've needed someone to hold the camera as you and your family posed in front of some famous landmark.

If you own a 35mm SLR camera, a

tripod is a godsend. Hand holding a macro or long telephoto lens can truly test one's patience...especially if you're using lower speed films and want sharp images with any depth of field. A tripod will hold your camera steady, leaving your hands free to adjust a focusing rail, trigger the shutter release, hold a fill card, an off-camera flash, or simply carry the weight of a heavy lens. The longer the lens, the more important a good sturdy tripod becomes.

When you decide to purchase a tripod, take your camera bag with you when you shop. By bringing your gear, you can test any new tripod with your own lenses and cameras before you buy. Such testing will allow you to make important comparisons between potential purchases.

Your first test should be for stability. Anything less than a super-steady tripod will make your images less than perfect. To test for steadiness, I recommend removing the head (if possible) and fully extending the legs to make the tripod as tall as it will go. Then, press down with your hand on the top. If there is any wobbling or bending, don't buy it! Also, give it a subtle nudge and see what happens. If it moves or shakes, think hard before buying.

While you have the legs fully extended, notice if this extension is enough to bring the camera viewfinder to your eye level. If not, choose another tripod. Even if raising the center post can bring the camera to eye level, don't buy it. By raising the center post, the camera is no longer well supported or braced. This makes it more vulnerable to vibration and movement, robbing you of the stability you're hoping to purchase in the first place.

How are the legs raised and lowered on the tripod? Is it a fluid, quick motion, or a frustrating, twisting, skin-pinching nightmare? Can each leg be set at different angles or are they locked into one place? Does this even matter to you? (If you ever work on uneven or rocky ground, the ability to angle each leg can be critical.)

Now, check the head of your tripod. There are basically two types of tripod heads in still photography: ball and pan & tilt heads. Ball heads are good for following moving subjects because they allow fluid movement in all three axis simultaneously. Pan & tilt heads are good for macro work or any use where very precise image placement is needed. Each axis of movement in a pan & tilt head is controlled by a separate handle and these heads are much slower to position. On better tripods, heads and legs can be purchased separately, so be sure to ask if the head you're looking at is the only choice for that tripod.

Lastly, notice how your camera or lens attaches to the various tripod heads. Some heads simply screw into the bottom of your camera or lens, while others offer quick release plates. A quick release plate is attached to your camera or lens and then attaches to the tripod head with the twist of a lever or the turn of a knob. There are several types offered, so try them all out and see which is the quickest and most convenient for your needs.

Tripods are an investment in your photo future. Buy a good solid tripod now and you'll probably never have to buy another in your lifetime...well, unless you back over it while packing the car. □

Recipes

By Joan Cone

Doves-First Game Of The Season

Doves are not terribly bright. However, they are very good at reproducing, flying and feasting on soybeans, corn or whatever crops are accidentally spilled and left in the fields. Even the most efficient agricultural machinery leaves plenty of high-quality food for mourning doves to eat.

These birds have been called the "ammunition makers' best friend." This isn't because so many are bagged, but that they are difficult to hit. It takes a good shot to limit out, and the reward is delicious eating. Just try the following meal, and you'll be convinced how tasty doves really are.

MENU

Filled Honeydew Melon
Doves Baked in Stuffing
Crunchy Top Tomato Slices
Caesar Salad
Chocolate Chip Banana Bread

Filled Honeydew Melon

Cut honeydew melons into thirds or quarters. Using a melon ball scooper, carefully make balls and retain shells. Cut balls from a cantaloupe and add a few pitted red grapes, sherry wine and apricot brandy to taste. Chill thoroughly; re-fill cavities in the melon shell with the fruit balls and grapes. Serve with a slice of lemon.

Doves Baked in Stuffing

1/2 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup sliced green onion
2 tablespoons snipped fresh parsley
1/4 cup butter or margarine
3 cups corn bread stuffing mix
1 cup chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram leaves
Salt and pepper to taste
12 dove breasts

Heat oven to 350°. Lightly grease a 2-quart casserole and set aside. In

medium skillet, cook and stir celery, onion and parsley in butter over medium heat until tender. Add stuffing mix, marjoram, salt and pepper; mix until moistened. Place half of stuffing mixture in prepared casserole. Arrange dove breasts over stuffing. Cover completely with remaining stuffing mixture. Bake, uncovered, until doves are cooked through and fork tender, about 1 hour. Serves 3 to 4.

Crunchy Top Tomato Slices

1/2 cup Wheaties cereal, crushed
1/4 cup biscuit baking mix
1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon crushed dried basil leaves
2 tablespoons firm margarine or butter
4 medium tomatoes

Heat oven to 400°. Mix cereal, baking mix, cheese and basil; cut in margarine with fork until mixture is crumbly. Spread evenly in ungreased square pan, 8 x 8 x 2-inches. Bake uncovered 5 minutes; stir. Bake until golden brown and crisp, 3 to 5 minutes longer. Stir with fork to crumble; cool slightly.

Reduce oven to 350°. Cut each tomato into 3 slices, about 1/2-inch each. Arrange slices, overlapping, in ungreased pie plate, 9 x 10 1/2-inches. Sprinkle evenly with crumbly mixture. Bake uncovered until tomatoes are hot, 10 to 12 minutes. Makes 6 servings.

Caesar Salad

1 egg
1 can (2 ounces) anchovy fillets
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 clove garlic
2 heads romaine lettuce, torn in bite-sized pieces
1/2 cup oil
1 cup seasoned croutons
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Salt and coarsely ground pepper to taste

Cook egg in boiling water 1 minute; remove and cool. Drain and mash anchovies; combine with lemon juice and Worcestershire sauce. Rub a large salad bowl with garlic; add lettuce. Pour oil over romaine lettuce, tossing to coat leaves. Add egg, tossing until completely mixed. Add anchovy mixture, croutons and cheese; toss again. Season with salt and pepper. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

*Chocolate Chip Banana Bread

Best when served the next day, this bread is an easy make-ahead. It can be frozen for later use as well.

3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup margarine or butter, softened
1 cup (2 medium) mashed ripe bananas
1/2 cup dairy sour cream
2 eggs
2 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup miniature semi-sweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup chopped nuts

Heat oven to 350°. Grease and flour bottom only of one 9 x 5 or two 8 x 4-inch loaf pans. In large bowl, combine sugar and margarine; beat until light and fluffy. Add bananas, sour cream and eggs; blend well. Stir in flour, baking soda and salt; blend well. Fold in chocolate chips and nuts. Pour into greased and floured pan. Bake at 350° for 55 to 65 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 15 minutes; remove from pan. Cool completely. Wrap tightly and store in refrigerator. Yield: 1 (16-slice) loaf.

* Recipe from *Pillsbury—The Complete Book of Baking*, Jackie Sheehan, senior editor, published by Viking, October, 1993. □



Maslowski photo

Virginia Wildlife Calendar 1994-1995

Want to know when the witch hazel blooms or ruffed grouse begin to nest? How about when striped bass run up the Staunton River or hawk migration peaks on the Blue Ridge?

Complemented by breathtaking color photography on every page, the *Virginia Wildlife Calendar* has information about the outdoors that makes sure you'll never be caught indoors again!

On sale now for only \$6.50, this year's *Virginia Wildlife Calendar* won't let you forget to put up your bluebird boxes next spring or buy your new fishing or hunting license before the season begins. Order yours today! Remember, this calendar begins in September and runs through next August.

Use the gray page inside this magazine to order, or send your check for \$6.50 to: *Virginia Wildlife Calendar*, c/o Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

Do it today, because supplies are limited!

Make Every Day a Bluebird Day

*...with the 1994-1995
Virginia Wildlife Calendar*